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**Encountering the Foreign:
The Educative Effect of the Foreign
in George Eliot's Novels of English Life**

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>SCL.</i>	<i>Scenes of Clerical Life</i>
<i>AB.</i>	<i>Adam Bede</i>
<i>MF.</i>	<i>The Mill on the Floss</i>
<i>SM.</i>	<i>Silas Marner</i>
<i>FH.</i>	<i>Felix Holt</i>
<i>MM.</i>	<i>Middlemarch</i>
<i>DD.</i>	<i>Daniel Deronda</i>
'LV'	'The Lifted Veil'
'BJ'	'Brother Jacob'
<i>TS.</i>	<i>Impressions of Theophrastus Such</i>

Essays: *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin, 1990).

Letters: *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Life: Cross, J. W., *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, 3 vols, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1885).

GEJ: *Journals of George Eliot*, ed. by Margaret Harris and J. Johnston, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

GEFR: *The George Eliot Fellowship Review*

GE-GHLS: *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies*

PMLA: *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the ways in which the encounter of the self with the other enlarges both individual characters and English life in George Eliot's fiction. The role of the foreign in her novels of English life gradually increases in general from novel to novel, and hence the chapters of my thesis are chronologically structured, and each chapter is devoted to one particular novel.

The Introduction consists of a brief history of George Eliot's own awakening through her foreign experiences, as her letters and journals reveal. In addition, critical and theoretical background material, particularly Foucault and Habermas, is briefly introduced. Chapter One is devoted to the first indications of the foreign in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Chapter Two considers the foreign in terms of sympathy in the rural world of *Adam Bede*. The next chapter examines the attitudes of the dominant culture towards the foreign in *The Mill on the Floss*. Chapter Four centres on different forms of the alien inserted into English life in *Silas Marner*, 'Lifted Veil' and 'Brother Jacob'. Chapter Five focuses on the ambiguous representation of Harold Transome's anglo-oriental identity, and English attitudes towards the Orient in *Felix Holt*. The last two chapters study *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, in which the encounter with the foreign is experienced beyond the borders of England. Chapter Six introduces the conflict between the conditions obtaining 'here-now in England' and those in the metropolitan city of Rome. In the last chapter, a synthesis of various encounters, which connects England to Europe and the Orient, is examined. My thesis concludes by appreciating the complexity of ~~the~~ identity, and the broader horizons achieved by the encounter with the foreign in George Eliot's novels of English life.

INTRODUCTION

[...] The only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to feel the pains and joys of those *who differ from themselves* in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human creatures.¹

George Eliot's main objective in her fiction is to enlarge the vision of her readers, particularly to make them understand those 'who differ from themselves.' That process of enlargement is one that is also enacted in the experience of her principal characters as they are shown defining their identities both as individuals and as representatives of their culture. This thesis, in general, seeks to investigate the ways in which cultural identity is represented in Eliot's novels of English life.² My argument will explore how the individual comes to an accommodation with the dominant values of society through a long process of education. In particular, I will argue that one of the most significant stages in this process is the encounter with the foreign, defined in either a literal sense as that which comes from abroad, or in the figurative sense of that which is unfamiliar to the local culture of provincial England. The meeting of the self with the 'other' is generally presented as a progressive step which has the effect of awakening and enlarging both individual and cultural identities. This process of enlargement is greatly valued by Eliot, and is presented in all its complexity in her novels of English life. It is not only individual lives that are enriched by the encounter with the foreign, since these novels suggest that there is a beneficial effect on the general culture of provincial England. The juxtaposition of the familiar and the foreign is both a characteristic mark

¹ *The George Eliot Letters* ed. by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1955), III, p. 111. Further references to *Letters* will be given within the text in parenthesis. (My Italics).

² For the concept of identity see Stuart Hall 'Who Needs Identity' in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 1-18.

of George Eliot's cosmopolitan mind and a recurrent indication of her persistent attempt 'to widen the English vision a little' (*Letters*, VI, p. 304).

The individual's development in Eliot's fiction is reached through a socialising process more than through formal education, and the latter is, indeed, frequently the object of criticism. The kind of education her novels enact is one that values difference above sameness, diversity and breadth above shallowness and narrowness. The individual is awakened by an encounter with what lies beyond the self, and this has the effect of bringing down the barriers between conflicting worlds: between old and new, home and abroad, self and other, familiar and foreign.³ The 'other', defined in individual, cultural, or geographical terms, represents a potential means of progress, stimulating wider connections and leading to a synthesis of conflicting elements in the long term.

The main concerns of this thesis can be summed up under two points: firstly, I shall examine the ways in which the self and the 'other' are extended as a cultural metaphor of the English and the foreign. English values and norms are examined, as is the way that these are measured against the foreign. The second goal in this thesis is to investigate the ways in which George Eliot's fiction takes a journey from the provincial to the national, and finally to an international dimension, in the course of her writing career between *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda*. Daniel Cottom takes a similar approach when he examines the historical conditions of 'the liberal intellectual', and lists the changes in ^{the} nineteenth-century which awakened a national consciousness of life rather than one that exists only on 'a local scale'. He adds that the patterns of Eliot's

³ For an historical account of different aspects of the self, see Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997); for a philosophical account of the self see the classic work by Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1989).

life epitomize this development. As with her physical journey from the Midlands to London, she intellectually develops 'from a narrow sort of Protestantism to an all-embracing religion of humanity' and 'the form of each of her novels recapitulates this passage from a provincial and parochial past to a future projected as a national and universal whole'. However my argument differs from Cottom's view that Eliot's details of ordinary life are not necessarily 'a broadening of the scope of aesthetics, as she argued, but rather a normalizing of this scope'.⁴ Where Cottom argues for normalization, my thesis will centre on the role of the foreign in Eliot's gradual development towards a diverse and troubling awareness of international themes and problems. In widening its scope, her fiction becomes not only more complex but also more modern in its handling of issues of culture and identity, and I aim to show how there is a developing sense of cultural relativism in the later works.⁵

I will be examining Eliot, as a writer whose origin is in the English midlands but whose mind is cosmopolitan. As John Rignall states 'although her novels deal mainly with English provincial life, that circumscribed world is conceived and scrutinized by a mind not bounded by those narrow horizons, but deeply versed in the literature, philosophy and culture of Europe and the wider world'.⁶ Her multi-dimensional approach goes beyond stereotypical images, and I shall show how most of the time she challenges the conventional English views of the 'foreign'. My reading of her fiction aims not to undermine Victorian culture as a homogenous system of values, but rather to investigate

⁴ Daniel Cottom, *Social Figures: George Eliot, Social History, and Literary Representation*, int. by Terry Eagleton, *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987), p. 17 and pp. 56-7.

⁵ The distinction between her earlier and later novels has been evaluated in terms of the social life they depict, bringing in the German terms of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. See Suzanne Graver, *George Eliot and Community: A Study in Social Theory and Fictional Form* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), also a recent study by Hao Li, *Memory and History in George Eliot: Transfiguring the Past* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

her subtle and diverse representation of both that system of values and the foreign ones which it encounters.

The figures in Eliot's novels who represent typically English values are mostly characterized by their narrowness of outlook, monotonous lives, colourless ideas and insistence on strict traditions. Captain Wybrow in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Arthur Donnithorne in *Adam Bede*, the Dodsons in *The Mill on the Floss*, the Casses in *Silas Marner*, Mrs Transome in *Felix Holt*, Rosamond Vincy and Sir James Chettam in *Middlemarch*, represent Englishness in one way or another, and, are critically presented by their creator. In most cases, English identities and norms are shown as based on narrow grounds, whereas those of characters with foreign connections are presented as having a potential for moral and mental enlargement. However, it is worth noting here that there are also figures who represent a more attractive kind of Englishness, such as Adam in *Adam Bede* or the Garths in *Middlemarch*; figures who live closely connected to the natural elements in their milieu, and are portrayed as positive and even picturesque examples of the rural world. Eliot's representations of the English provincial world are, of course, nothing if not complex.

The primary phase of encountering the foreign is through travel beyond England, which is at first perceived an escape from the familiar to the unknown. My argument proposes that before awakening and enlarging the self, these journeys reveal anxieties and bring out the conflicts and gaps between contradictory identities, worlds and cultures.⁷ The

⁶ John Rignall, ed. *George Eliot and Europe* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), (p. xi).

⁷ Travel has been discussed as a metaphor of Western ambition to reach the unknown particularly in Romantic texts. On this point see, for example, Georges van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor: From Montaigne to Rousseau* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992); Behdat Ali, *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Roger Cardinal,

rural, national or foreign features of the setting are related to the internal development of the character from a narrow to an enlarged understanding of the world.⁸

Journeys, either undertaken or simply referred to, involve mainly three spaces, geographically and culturally distinct from England: Europe, the Colonial Territories of the Empire, and the Orient. Of these the most important is Continental Europe, well-known to George Eliot from her own journeys. Although there is a case to be made for Europe as an essential part of England's cultural heritage,⁹ I will focus more on the ways in which it functions as a cultural 'other', a broad version of what insular England ought to be, in so far as it embraces and tolerates cultural cosmopolitanism.¹⁰

The British Empire is only occasionally glimpsed in the background of the action in references to the West Indies, India, America etc.¹¹ Imperialist attitudes to those territories are revealed with careful ironic distance by Eliot, and she proceeds to show the invisible power of imperial culture over its members. References to the Empire, no matter how brief they are, will be examined wherever they are pertinent to my argument. As far as the Orient is concerned, although there are some other minor

'Romantic Self' in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 135-156.

⁸ Two important works starting from the similar points of departure are useful to follow in the framework of 'transculturation' and the image of English woman in voyage. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Pratt is engaged with how travel has 'produced Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call 'the rest of the world', (p. 5). The other work is Karen R. Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Lawrence challenges the historical concept of 'travel' focusing on gender.

⁹ Hans Ulrich Seeber, 'Cultural Synthesis in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*' in *George Eliot and Europe*, ed. by John Rignall (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 17-33. Seeber's valuable argument suggests the former option was represented by Eliot.

¹⁰ For a theoretical background see Francis Barker, Peter Hulme et. al eds. *Europe and Its Others* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985).

¹¹ See Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

references, it is exemplified mainly by the Turks and the Greeks of Smyrna in *Felix Holt* and by the Jews in *Daniel Deronda*, and it offers enlargement towards a world different both from England and from Europe. Enlargement as a form is also a feature of George Eliot's last novel, which reaches further and attains wider horizons than her earlier fiction, and it presents her modernity and her cultural relativism in their most developed form. In her attitude to both the Empire and the Orient George Eliot will emerge in my reading as more understanding and progressive than contemporary post-colonial criticism has usually made her out to be.

Besides travel to other parts of the world, the foreign is introduced into English life through foreigners, outsiders, and marginal figures, who provoke revealing reactions in the local community. For example, one of the earliest foreign figures, Caterina is remembered for her foreignness by the local inhabitants many years after her death. The typical attitudes of provincial England is subject to Eliot's ironic distance and critical treatment in each novel. Nevertheless the introduction of foreigners into English life takes a new turn with Harold's return from the East. Harold and those who follow him, like Ladislav, Mirah and Deronda, are handled differently in so far as they are introduced not by the comments or gossip of provincial society, but rather by their own words or actions. This progress is related to the growing thematic and structural importance of the foreign in Eliot's later works.

George Eliot's Experience of the Foreign

The biographical evidence shows that Eliot's experience of the foreign in her life was crucial for her development. She made several journeys to Europe at crucial times of her life, apart from reading widely in foreign literature and doing important work as a

translator. She went abroad first in 1849 after her father died, and on her return she decided to move to London and started to write for the *Westminster Review*, a move which loosened her ties with her family. Her bid for independence can thus be said to have begun with her first trip abroad. As a foreigner, she discovered and strengthened her own sense of self through her experience of difference, as can be seen from her letters, which provide important evidence of what the encounter with foreign life and culture meant to her.¹²

On 14 May 1848, almost a year before she herself went abroad George Eliot wrote as follows to John Sibree, with whom she liked to share her intellectual ideas:

I like the notion of your going to *Germany* as good in every way, for yourself, body and mind, and for all others. O the bliss of having a very high attic in a *romantic continental town, such as Geneva* – far away from morning callers dinners and decencies; and then to pause for a year and think ‘de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis,’ and then *to return to life*, and work for poor stricken humanity and *never think of self again* (*Letters*, I, p. 260, my italics).

Her dream of Germany seems to express not simply pleasure about John Sibree’s planned trip, but also, beyond this, a personal desire of her own. The imagined foreign location is seen as a retreat from the world, in which the self would be free to develop through reading and reflection. It would provide an opportunity for indulging and enlarging the self before commitment to a life of selfless activity. It is her own dream that she seems to be articulating here and it implies how tired she is of her home environment and how she would like to be part of a wider humanity than that of Nuneaton and Coventry. The letter is, of course, oddly prophetic since, when she made her first journey abroad after her father’s death in the following year, it was precisely in

¹² See Margaret Harris, ‘What Eliot Saw in Europe: The Evidence of her Journals’, in *George Eliot and Europe*, ed. by John Rignall (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 1- 17. In her expansive discussion of

Geneva that she ended up staying for eight months. Significantly, it was with her friends Charles and Clara Bray, who had been instrumental in helping to widen her social and intellectual horizons when she first moved to Coventry, that she undertook this first journey abroad.

Her letters written to her friends in England during her stay in Geneva give us details of her life in the Swiss town. Even though she frequently complained about her headaches, and her cold feet, she seemed happy getting to know foreign people, speaking a foreign language, and living in a foreign culture at probably the most problematic period in her life, during which she experienced the loss of familial connections, shortage of money, and anxiety about a possible vocation at the same time as she was recovering from a personal loss. This period for Eliot was indeed a time of seeking to establish an independent selfhood.

She often writes to the Brays describing people coming and going in the hotel or house in which she is lodging and her interest in these varied forms of human life and personality seems to hint at the novelist to come. The cosmopolitan nature of Genevan society appears to have been a particular source of fascination, and her letters are full of names of the different people from various countries that she met, as in the description below:

The St. Germaines are gone – alas! – and the charming Frankfort people whom I liked almost as well. There is no one here of much interest now. M. De Herder, the two Prussians Mm. De Pfuell, 2 English old maids, and an Irish family who came yesterday, Mlle. Rosa, Mmle.de Phaisan and Mrs. Locke who are the 3 oldest inhabitants. Madame de Ludwigsdorff, the cousin of Mlle. Rosa and the wife of an Austrian Baron, has been here for two days, and is coming again. She is

handsome, spirited and clever, pure *English* by birth, but quite *foreign* in manners and appearance (*Letters*, I, p. 300-301, my italics).

She compares life, people, culture and other things in Geneva and in England, and seems generally to favour Geneva. She introduces the term 'foreign' juxtaposed to 'English' in her description of Madame de Ludwigsdorff, and the foreignness she observes in this lady indicates what Eliot will create in her fiction: complicated identities, some of them involving this kind of synthesis of English and the foreign.

In another letter to the Brays, she assures them that the cholera which is affecting Coventry 'is not at Geneva – the medical men say it is cholera-proof. The place is crowded with *foreigners*, the Hotels quite full' (*Letters*, I, p. 310, my italics). Apart from the implied technical and scientific superiority of Geneva, in some other letters, she directly contrasts it with Coventry in terms of beauty and richness of life. 'Good-bye, dear loves – shan't I kiss you when I am in *England again – in England!* I already begin to think of the journey as impossibility. *Geneva is so beautiful now the trees have their richest colouring. Coventry is a fool to it* – but then you are at Coventry and you are better than lake trees and mountains to your affectionate Mary Ann' (*Letters*, I, 319, my italics). The Swiss City harbours foreigners from different countries and origins, whereas her hometown Coventry is insular and inferior in everything except intimate friendship.

This period was crucial in her life in that she was left alone by her father's death, and had not yet fixed her mind on a career. She expected affection and love from her close relations and friends, and occasionally complained about their apparent lack of interest: 'You know, or you do not know, that my nature is so chameleon I shall lose all my identity unless you keep nourishing the old self with letters – so pray write as much and

as often as you can' (*Letters*, I, p. 303). Some of her letters start or end in a similar complaint to her friends: 'I am so ex[cited] at the idea of the time being so near when I am to leave Geneva – a real grief – and see my friends in England – a perfectly overwhelming joy – that I can do nothing [...] And you all do not write me one word to tell me you long for me. [...] I have a great mind to elope to Constantinople and never see any one any more!' (*Letters*, I, p. 331). This letter was written to Charles Bray, on 1 March 1850 when she was preparing to go back to England. Her idea of escaping to Constantinople, though it is mentioned only as a joke, suggests Eliot's continuing dissatisfaction with, and questioning of, England. This brief reference to the East in her life is repeated 15 years later in *Felix Holt*, in which she sends Harold Transome – an English-Tory – off to the East, and brings him back as an Anglo-Oriental Radical. Eliot's own exile from her family may be recalled in Harold's problematic relations with his family.

On 25 March 1850 she returned to England, and spent the first weeks sharing her experiences with her friends and relatives. Her personal unhappiness, back at home, makes her think of living in Geneva, if not in Constantinople. She wrote to Martha Jackson, when staying at Griff:

I am not yet decided as to my future plans – whether I shall remain in England or return to Geneva. [...] My return to England is anything but joyous to me, for old associations are rather painful than otherwise to me (*Letters*, I, p. 234).

In a letter written to Sara Sophia Hennell, Eliot's regret at ever returning to England is clearly connected to problems at home:

O the *dismal weather* and the *dismal country* and the *dismal people*. It was some envious demon that drove me across the Jura to come and see people who don't want me. However I am determined to sell everything *I possess except a portmanteau* and carpet-bag and the necessary

contents and be *a stranger and a foreigner* on the earth for ever more (*Letters*, I, p. 335, my italics).

Two significant points deserve notice here. One is that Eliot is critical of certain aspects of English life, such as weather, country and people. The other is that her determination 'to be a stranger and foreigner on the earth for ever more' also underlines her feeling of foreignness in her own life. She speaks of being 'a foreigner' herself, when she feels alone and bitter, and this may remind one of Ladislav's alienation and possession of nothing more than a portmanteau in *Middlemarch*. She writes similar comments to the Brays, telling of her isolation from her family: '[...] I am delighted to feel that I am of no importance to any of them, and have no motive for living amongst them. I have often told you I thought Melchisedec the only happy man, and I think so more than ever' (*Letters*, I, p. 336). Eliot experienced similar problems to Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* with her roots, and particularly with her brother, and this led to a painful isolation and separation from her family. During her encounter with the foreign, it seems that she started to reconsider the relationship not only between Coventry and Geneva, but also between 'old and new', 'family and others', 'home and foreign', England and Europe. All these relationships are connected to the fundamental question she was asking herself on her return from Geneva: 'What am I going to do?' a question that she later depicted her characters asking themselves in her novels.

Eliot's second visit to the Continent in 1854, was after she set out to live with George Henry Lewes in Germany to escape from the gossip that would have plagued them in England. Until the death of Lewes, she went to Europe with him at crucial times in her life, mostly after she had finished a novel or to collect material and seek inspiration for a new one. They travelled several times to France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Switzerland, and about Austria and Spain. Although her wish to see both the new world,

America, and the East, was not fulfilled on account of either ill-health or the travel conditions of the time, her interest in the world beyond England never died.

Travelling was important for enlarging her life in the long term, no matter if it brought disappointment at first. After finishing *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot and Lewes set off to Paris and then to Italy. Her journey to Italy in 1860 provoked conflicting feelings, such as Dorothea feels in *Middlemarch*. She enters in her journal her wish to 'go and absorb some new life and gather fresh ideas'. In 'Recollections of Italy' she sees Italy a historical and sensuous place, which will inspire her imagination in the long term rather than satisfying her immediate desire for happiness. Encountering the new elements in a foreign country brings new directions and wholeness to her self, and leads her to feel the existence of a wider world. When, for instance, she describes a sunset ride in a gondola in Venice, she maintains that 'it is the sort of scene in which I could most readily forget my own existence and feel *melted into the general life*'.¹³

Those same terms occurs again in the following entry in her journal in which she reflects on her first visit to Italy, and its importance in her life:

We have finished our journey to Italy – the journey I had looked forward to for years, rather with the hope of the *new elements* it would bring to *my culture*, than with the hope of immediate pleasure. Travelling can hardly be without a continual current of disappointment if the main object is not the *enlargement of one's general life*, so as to make even weariness and annoyances enter into the sum of benefit. One great deduction to me from the delight of seeing *world-famous objects* is the frequent double consciousness which tells me that I am not enjoying the actual vision enough, and that when higher enjoyment comes with the reproduction of the scenes in my imagination, I shall have lost some of the details, which impress me too feebly in the present because the faculties are not wrought up into energetic action (*Life*, p. 305).

¹³ J. W. Cross, *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1885), Vol. I, p. 314. Hereafter abbreviated within the text as *Life* (My italics).

It is precisely this feeling of the 'enlargement of one's general life' that Eliot tries to depict in her novels in order to extend the views of her readers, and in that process of enlargement the encounter with foreign people, places and cultures plays a crucial role as it did in her own life.

Critical and Theoretical Panorama: The Invisible Power of Culture

The foreign, in general, is a neglected aspect in the immense amount of work on George Eliot's fiction, whereas education in various forms has been commonly studied by her critics. Some of them consider Eliot's intellectual capacity and her education level,¹⁴ others focus on her moral teaching and her doctrine of sympathy,¹⁵ while others look at the structural importance of education; for example, Eliot's use of the *Bildungsroman* or a novel of vocation.¹⁶ Moreover an increasing feminist concern for, and mostly, anger at

¹⁴ On this point see, for example, Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 161-209; Sheldon Rothblatt, 'George Eliot as a Type of European Intellectual', *History of European Ideas*, 7:1 (1986), 47-65; Valerie A. Dodd, *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

¹⁵ To name a few of them, William Myers, *The Teaching of George Eliot* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984); Forest Pyle, 'A Novel Sympathy: The Imagination of Community in George Eliot', *Novel*, 27:1 (1993), 5-23. Thomas A. Noble, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), focuses on the Romantic tradition of 'the doctrine of sympathy' to understand another's suffering and Eliot's use of it. Simon Dentith, *George Eliot* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), takes the extension of our sympathies, and as a social practice, an essential characteristic of human life, used by a realist writer. Sympathy is to 'strengthen social cohesion, to bind people together in a social organism threatened by the exclusiveness of class', (p. 53). Ellen Argyros in her recent study "*Without Any Check of Proud Reserve*": *Sympathy and Its Limits in George Eliot's Novels* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) suggests sympathy 'as a kind of imaginative transportation beyond the boundaries of the self and the most claims to a recognition of the differences between self and the other', (p. 2). Argyros takes a similar line to mine in her understanding of the paradoxical nature of the term sympathy as used by Eliot. She says 'Eliot recognises difference almost exclusively through the process of sympathetic identification, yet sympathy by definition attempts to eradicate or neutralize difference through identification', (p. 3).

¹⁶ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), pp. 207-227; see also Allan Mintz, *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978). Bernard J. Paris, in *Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965) considers education as the development of the self and Paris describes three stages of moral development in her novels. The first stage is 'the egoistic where self is seen as the centre of the world', the second is where self is 'totally alien and spiritually homeless', and the third is when self is 'giving up its egocentricity', (p. 132).

her attitude towards female education¹⁷ concentrates on the contradiction between her novels and her own experience.

Among recent works, Linda Robertson's book *The Power of Knowledge: George Eliot and Education* is a full analysis of different aspects of education in George Eliot.¹⁸ Daniel Cottom, however, looks at the social formation of education in the middle-class of nineteenth-century England. He argues that 'the extent of human growth came to be measured by cultured middle-class standards of behaviour, dress, speech, and belief', and reads Eliot's works as representing this culture.¹⁹ Education in this thesis is evaluated in its broadest sense, as a long-term cultural agent, which constructs individual, cultural and national identities. In my argument, the cultural effect of education is considered during the quest for a new basis of identity. Both as an individual and a social process, the role of education is to create respect for individual differences, and to promote understanding of cultural others. As is studied by various disciplines, the individual is closely tied to and 'invisibly' constructed and shaped by the surrounding cultural and social norms. Certain groups, such as the family and the social community, transmit the values and expectations of culture and society to succeeding generations through various types of education. My main emphasis will be

¹⁷ On the other hand, the Female *Bildungsroman* attempts to 'rewrite the social text' by orphaning the idealised heroine in order to cut her bonds with the past of sameness. Origins and mothers are seen as constituting as the same and individual development as difference. The construction of female identity within the family and outside (private and public spheres) is a paradoxical matter in the nineteenth century world. See E.T. Bannet, 'Rewriting the Social Text: The Female *Bildungsroman* in 18th Century England' in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. by James Hardin (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991). See also Charlotte Goodman, 'The Lost Brother, the Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double Bildungsroman', *Novel*, 17: 1 (1983), 28-43. See Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines* (London, New York: Routledge, 1989); Zelda Austen, 'Why Feminist Critics are Angry with George Eliot', *College English*, 37 (1976), 549-66.

¹⁸ Linda K. Robertson, *The Power of Knowledge: George Eliot and Education* (New York, Washington DC, Peter Land: 1997); Linda K. Robertson 'To Educate or Not to Educate: Patterns for Women in George Eliot's Novels', *GEFR*, 19 (1988), 28-31. Another recent critic who has written on George Eliot and education in general is John A. Huzzard, 'George Eliot and Education', *GEFR*, 11 (1980), 11-14. It gives an account of female experience of education in her novels.

on education's direct link to culture, which has also been considered diversely from Matthew Arnold onwards.²⁰ Close affinities between culture and education have been made explicit by Raymond Williams in his classical *The Long Revolution* in which he points out that 'what is thought of as 'an education' [is] in fact a particular selection, a particular set of emphases and omissions'.²¹ He gives three definitions of culture, the third of which is the social definition, in which 'culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. [...T]he clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture'.²² Culture, as the sum of all these norms and values, can be transmitted through various forms of education.²³ Education, then, is not free from subjective elimination of culture and one of the purposes education has is 'to pass on: the accepted behaviour and values of society'.²⁴ According to Stuart Hall, in culture there is an essence, some shared experience of 'oneness', which provides a stable set of meanings, codes and frames of reference. An organic society is based on the shared meaning of certain values and norms, which constitute its tradition.²⁵ Hall has described the nature of such cultural identity as a strongly centred, highly exclusive form of cultural identity. It knows itself as the centre and is able to place everything else as the 'other', be it colonized other or

¹⁹ Daniel Cottom, p. 13.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of culture and its definitions see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Rosamond Billington et. al. ed., *Culture and Society: A Sociology of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1991). See also Lesley Johnson, *The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); John and Lizzie Elridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994); Ann Gray, Jim McGuian eds., *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996).

²¹ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, 1965), p. 145. The same idea is repeated by various critics from Freud to Foucault who emphasise the idea of normality in culture for what it excludes.

²² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Hogart, 1993), p. 41.

²³ For the culture-education relation and the postcolonial limits of Williams, see Dennis L. Dworking and Leslie G. Roman, eds., *Views Beyond the Border Country* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁴ Lawrence Grossberg, et al. eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York, London: Routledge, 1992), p. 201.

any less powerful other.²⁶ Difference when defined and used as a potential danger to the stable system of the central interests, is applied to everything different within and beyond the structure.²⁷

Modernity's understanding of the self promoted the idea that the self finds its identity through social experiences and education rather than through inheriting it, as it did in the pre-modern world before the 17th century. The conception of the self as a soul with which the individual is associated had to be abandoned in order to study the 'self in its dependence upon the social group to which it belongs'.²⁸ As Franco Moretti argues in his *The Way of the World* the origins of the *Bildungsroman* in European culture is no longer the slow and predictable progress towards one's father's work, but rather through 'apprenticeship' within an uncertain exploration of social space.²⁹ The *Bildungsroman* as the 'symbolic form of modernity' explores the hero's discovery of the self.³⁰ Within this process of progress, 'the other' can be comprehended as a mirror contrast to the self.³¹

²⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-237.

²⁶ Stuart Hall, 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', in *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, ed. by A. King (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 28.

²⁷ On this subject see Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

²⁸ G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 1.

²⁹ George Eliot's relation to Goethe and *Bildungsroman* has been widely studied. Primarily Rosemary Ashton, 'Mixed and Erring Humanity: George Eliot, G. H. Lewes and Goethe', *GE-GHLS*, 24-25 (1993), 93-117. Recently Gerlinde Röder-Bolton, wrote *George Eliot and Goethe: An Elective Affinity* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998).

³⁰ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), (p. 5). On the other hand Marc Redfield contradicts this general definition of the *Bildungsroman* and highlights the 'phantom' nature of the genre: *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

³¹ For example Gabriela Schwab, *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen: Otherness in Literary Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), suggests that the mirroring 'other' provides a rudimentary framework for judgements such as comparison, anticipation, self-criticism, and self-scrutiny which is commonly symbolised as a journey of the young individual in the world to find a new basis of identity, (p. ix). For detailed analysis see also James Hardin ed., *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman* (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

Although there is a great deal of biographical evidence of George Eliot's attachment to the foreign, its role in her fiction has received little attention from literary criticism. Among few works on the cultural encounter represented in her fiction, Gisela Argyle's *German Element in the Fiction of George Eliot, Gissing and Meredith* is an expansive study of Eliot's connections with German philosophy and literature and has chapters on *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.³² Andrew Thompson's *George Eliot and Italy*, similarly examines the political background of Italy and Eliot's intellectual, cultural and sentimental attachment to Italy as represented in her novels and other writings.³³ Both works, however, trace out a single point of view, and do not deal with the international dimension of Eliot's work in general. In *George Eliot and Europe*, edited by John Rignall and based on various papers given at a Warwick Conference. Barbara Hardy's 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness' has provided a similar treatment of the foreign in Eliot's novels to my own, and inspired my argument in the first stages of this thesis.³⁴

Parallel to the variety of new approaches in contemporary literary and cultural criticism, a huge amount of work has been done to relate education and culture in the theoretical field.³⁵ I draw theoretical support for understanding how the 'other' or the 'foreign' educates the individual from a number of different sources, since there is no single theory to define concepts such as the individual, the self, the subject, the other, and the foreign, which are complicated, interrelated and also popular.

³² Gisela Argyle, *German Elements in the Fiction of George Eliot, Gissing and Meredith* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter D. Lang, 1979).

³³ Andrew Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy: Literary, Cultural and Political Influences from Dante to the Risorgimento* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

³⁴ Barbara Hardy, 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness', *GE-GHLS*, 24-25 (1993), 1-16.

³⁵ Kiernan Ryan, ed. *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader* (London, New York: Arnold, 1996) discusses the main issues in short passages from the main stream and has an expansive bibliography.

In the process of reaching a sense of identity, most individuals share certain group characteristics such as, gender, class, religion and nationality.³⁶ These cultural norms and ideology emphasise normality and sameness while classifying, differentiating and excluding the 'other'.³⁷ The dominant ideology projects its own values as 'normal' and imagines the others as inferior. Similar to individual identities, cultural identities are thus constructed around the world-views of certain groups or institutions in society.³⁸ There is however a danger of simplifying or homogenising a complicated term such as the 'other', and this is similarly the case with the term foreign, as Jorge Larraín points out: 'while universalistic theories of modernity looked at the "other" from the perspective of the European rational subject, thus reducing all cultural differences to its own unity, historicist theories looked at the "other" from the perspective of its unique and specific cultural set-up, thus emphasising difference and segmentation'.³⁹ Thus, the excluded and marginalized 'other' becomes the segmented self. For example, some recent post-colonial critics attack nineteenth-century Western writers for using the foreign solely as a negative term while some others suggest that subjectivity is inevitable and, besides, cultural prejudice was the reality of those times. My aim as already stated is to see the foreign as serving to promote wider horizons when it encounters the self.

³⁶ For a discussion of Nationalism and the West see Jürgen Habermas, 'Historical Consciousness and Post-Traditional Identity: The Federal Republic's Orientation to the West', in *The New Conservatism*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp. 249-267.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of the Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970).

³⁸ Althusser points out that identity or consciousness, whether it is individual or social, cannot accede to the Real through its own internal development but only by the radical discovery of what is other than itself. Luis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 160-170. Freud understands the self as a conscious subject and reveals how forces of which it was not conscious, shape the subject. Following Freud, Lacan argues that the subject is always incomplete and 'in process'.

³⁹ Jorge Larraín, *Ideology and Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), (p. 142).

Foucault's idea of subject-object dichotomy, as well as Habermas' theory of interactive relations between individual self and the other have been useful to locate my argument on firmer ground. The subject for Foucault is a passive receiver, almost a victim of the dominant power institutions and of ordering and inflexible codes. The twin terms power and knowledge tightly mediate the subject. Power is mostly applied as a form or technique of domination by certain groups and categorizes and marks the individual. Foucault categorises four forms of resemblance in the knowledge of Western culture: *convenientia* where things are in juxtaposition and 'the extremity of the one also denotes the beginning of the other', in which way communication starts and resemblance between two things appears.⁴⁰ The second form is *aemulatio* in which links of the chain are no longer connected. A sort of twinship in things comes into being, however, when they are 'confronted in a merely inert state of opposition' and this generates a differential power ~~starts~~ between things in the world. 'One may be weaker, and therefore receptive to the stronger influence of the other'.⁴¹ The third form is *analogy*, which has more subtle relations and invisible resemblances. The last one is *sympathy*, which has power to draw 'things towards one another in an exterior and visible movement'.⁴²

Sympathy is an instance of the *Same* so strong and so insistent that it will not rest content to be merely one of the forms of likeness; it has the dangerous power of *assimilating*, of rendering things identical to one another, of mingling them, of causing their individuality to disappear – and thus of rendering them foreign to what they were before. Sympathy transforms. It alters, but in the direction of identity, so that if its power were not counterbalanced it would reduce the world to a point, to a homogeneous mass, to the featureless form of the Same: all its parts would hold together and communicate with one another without a

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 18. For further discussion of Foucault's use of the self and the other see Romand Coles, *Self, Power, Other: Political Theory and Dialogical Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell, University Press, 1992).

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 20.

⁴² *ibid.* p. 23.

break, with no distance between them [...] This is why sympathy is compensated for by its twin, antipathy.⁴³

Foucault argues that sympathy throughout western history had been a major vehicle for identifying with what is perceived to be the same. The danger of sympathy is, indeed, that it renders everything the same, that it erases distinctions. The opposite form to sympathy is antipathy, which differentiates and puts distances between things and for Foucault, the counter-balance of sympathy and antipathy is necessary for the identity of things. His thinking here has a bearing on the role of sympathy for George Eliot, and I wish to argue that in her fiction sympathy does not in fact erase distinctions and obliterate individuality but, rather, achieves that counterbalance that Foucault sees as necessary for identity although in a different way – not by recourse to antipathy but by insisting on the difference and otherness inherent in this object of sympathy. Sympathy, for Eliot is to feel and understand the ‘other’s’ suffering rather than identifying with the same. Sympathy is achieved through the awakening and enlargement of the self, and the presence of the foreign is crucial during this process of understanding the self, of undergoing enlargement, and finally achieving tolerance and sympathy for the other through a direct encounter. To sympathise with the other’s pain and happiness teaches the self its own nature, widens its capacity to feel and identify with those who differ from it.

If we do not have experience of the feelings of others we will never be able to conceive that they may be in trouble. Our senses cannot inform us beyond our own horizons, and the only way we can form a conception of others is to encounter them. We can then imagine their situation and come to feel sympathy for them. However this does not

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 24.

mean that we become identical to the other we sympathise with, as Foucault fears; but rather, we become enlarged with the possibilities of another's life. In other words the process of sympathy that George Eliot envisages is not one in which individuals are absorbed into a homogenous mass but rather one in which differences are acknowledged, maintained and respected.⁴⁴ Sympathetic imagination that is not based on a concrete knowledge of the other person may, by contrast, lead to stereotyping the other and thus minimising their individualism. All this is pertinent to Eliot's fiction and the way that it calls for various levels of sympathy and tolerance towards those who differ from the majority.

While Foucault's theory underpins the significance of the Same, his model of intersubjective social relations places the object, (the other) in a central role in the constitution of the individual's identity, and thus reduces the individual to a passive being who is observed, differentiated and judged by disciplinary power agents.⁴⁵ This is less pertinent to George Eliot than the theory of Habermas, who considers identity, as constructed and mediated through mutual communication, a process of socialisation in which the individual is accommodated to social and linguistic norms.⁴⁶ Unlike Foucault, Habermas' interest is not in the operation of power but in the learning of social and linguistic norms. It is an interactive process where the self becomes involved with

⁴⁴ Eliot states this in her 'Notes on Form in Art' in discriminating 'one object from another' she compares a rock to a man: [...] the true expression of the difference is, that the wholeness of the stone depends simply on likeness of crystallization and is merely a wholeness of mass which may be broken up into other wholes; whereas the outline defining the wholeness of the human body is due to a consensus or constant interchange of effects among its parts. It is wholeness not merely of mass but of strict and manifold dependence. The word 'consensus' expresses that fact in a complex organism by which no part can suffer increase or diminution without a participation of all other parts in the effect produced and a consequent modification of the organism as a whole' (pp. 357-58). *George Eliot: Selected Critical Writings*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* ed. by C. Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980).

others. The self is integrated by the simultaneous interactive relationships; in other words, personal identity is socially mediated. This mutual communication process arouses the idea of an interactive learning process. Following Mead's steps, Habermas points out that 'no one can construct an identity independently of the identifications that others make of him'.⁴⁶ In an individual's life history, family, collective identities, social, economic and linguistic elements function as unconscious processes to construct identity. Habermas starts by accepting the social influences over the individual self, and frames his theory around the communicative action through which the individual affects, and is affected by other individuals.

Identities are formed in social relationships through taking up various social roles, but most especially by taking up the role of 'the generalized other' at the last stage of the ego development. Only after this process, can individuals reflectively question the legitimacy of norms, move beyond conventionally rationalized beliefs and values and reach their ego identities. The development of ego-identity requires the learning of social and linguistic norms, through which the true identity is produced and it is this kind of process that I will be examining in George Eliot's fiction.

Edward Said's argument on cultural forms of subject-object dichotomy has also a useful bearing on my study as far as the construction of cultural and national identity in Eliot's novels is concerned. In his *Orientalism* Said highlights the idea that European identity has been established and seen as 'a superior one in comparison with all the non-

⁴⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* trans. by Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1979). See also Johanna Meehan ed., *Feminist read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

⁴⁷ G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, Society*, p. 107.

European peoples and cultures'.⁴⁸ Another postcolonial critic Benita Parry, similarly, argues that: 'the constitution of the European Self, by defining and encoding its colonies as Other, is privileged over Europe's diverse modes of self-presentation that were re-assembled in the triumphalist culture of imperialism, and in permuted form has persisted in a cultural hegemony where Western norms and values are equated with Universal forms of thought'.⁴⁹ The dominant imperial culture appraised Western standards of aesthetics and cultural values and depreciated other cultures. The term imperialism for Said means 'the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory [...] thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others'.⁵⁰ The idea of imperialism is 'not only about soldiers and canons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings'.⁵¹ Edward Said's analysis has certain failings, such as the way in which he seems to ignore the privileging of race, class and gender within the western hegemony,⁵² but his emphasis on how imperialism has invisible effects on

⁴⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 7.

⁴⁹ Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9:1-2 (1987), 27-58, (p. 34).

⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 5.

⁵¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 6.

⁵² As well as Said's 'bold generalizations', in general, there is a sort of 'conceptual slipperiness of 'discursive colonialism in terms of historical specificity and of agency. S. Slemon, 'The Scramble for Post-colonialism', in *De-scribing Empire: Post Colonialism and Textuality*, ed. by Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 15-32. Edward Said's theory becomes problematic in that 'one text by a single author epitomizes the operation of a whole, developed system of ideas about empire across the literature of the early nineteenth century', (p. 24). Thus, Said seems to ignore both the individual views of the different texts and heterogeneous views of a single text. Said is criticized for some other reasons, for example, Firdeus Azim sees the relationship between the novel and the imperial project as many - faceted in terms of 'theme, formation of subject positions and formation of a pedagogical subject', (p. 32). *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (London: Routledge, 1993). See also Daniel Bivona, *Desire and Contradiction: Imperial Visions and Domestic Debates in Victorian Literature* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990). Bivona also starts from the idea that 'if the imperial experience of the nineteenth century had a truly profound impact on English culture, the 'domestic novel' ought to carry some traces of its cultural imprint', (p. vii). For discussion of problematic aspects of post-colonial theory see also Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the "Post Colonial"', *Social Text*, 31-32 (1992), 99-113.

culture will be useful in my argument as I examine the construction of individual and cultural identities in Eliot's novels.⁵³

However, my reading of George Eliot differs from that of Said and other post-colonial critics by giving due weight to her respect for cultural difference and otherness. I suggest that education both as an individual and a social process is used by Eliot to rouse respect for individual differences, to open ways of communication with 'others' regardless of their personal, cultural or geographical differences. Trying to avoid generalisations about Victorian values as well as about Eliot's representation of nineteenth-century social life, my argument considers George Eliot in her own time and space and does not castigate her, as some post-colonial criticism appears to do, for not showing the values of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century. My reading neither praises Eliot with bold generalisations which undermine her complexity, nor attacks her novels merely from the standpoint of post-colonial theory.

I will rather investigate how the cultural self displaces or excludes the cultural other, by using its normalising power, to discipline and punish, to borrow Foucault's terms.⁵⁴ I shall employ Habermas' theory of interactive relations in identity formation, where the 'other', in the form of other individuals, has an active role, to guide me in positioning the self's encounter with the other in the learning process. I am going to examine the ways in which George Eliot represents the English social and cultural system (or Englishness) in its approach to the 'other' and the foreign.⁵⁵ The classification of

⁵³ For the definition of and historical approaches to, the term imperialism, see C. C. Elridge, *The Imperial Experience: From Carlyle to Foster* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ For further discussion of knowledge-power and education see James D. Marshall, *Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education* (Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).

⁵⁵ In this context see M. Spiering, *Englishness: Foreigners and the Images of National Identity in Postwar Literature* (Mansterdam: Rodopi, 1992); Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity*

Habermas' identity development from familial to wider relations can be related to Eliot's depiction of social relations from the local to the international in the chronological order of her novels.

The structure of my analysis will, therefore, follow the gradually increasing role of the foreign in terms of the chronology of the novels. I will explore how in each novel the educative effect of the foreign increases in importance and how the interaction between Englishness and the foreign becomes increasingly complex. The prejudiced attitude of the local figures towards Caterina in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story', shifts to the 'oppressed narrowness' of the old English town towards its own members in *The Mill on the Floss*, and becomes the cosmopolitan atmosphere of London, Leubronn, Genoa, Frankfurt, Mainz (and even Palestine metaphorically) in *Daniel Deronda*, in which each character is touched by the foreign in one way or another. Each chapter will, therefore, be devoted to a particular novel, starting with Eliot's first work of fiction and concluding with *Daniel Deronda*. I have restricted my analyses to Eliot's representation of the foreign in her novels of English life; neither *Romola*, for this reason, nor other categories of work are included in this thesis, except where her essays, for example, throw light upon the fiction.

in the Culture of Colonialism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Perry Anderson, *English Questions* (London: Verso, 1992); Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1987); Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-33 and pp. 200-230. Stuart Hall points out that 'we know what it is to be "British", not only because of certain national characteristics, but also because we can mark its "difference" from its "others" – "Britishness" is not-French, not-American, not-German, not-Pakistani, not-Jamaican and so on. Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), pp. 234-235. For differences between Britishness and Englishness see also the introduction chapter of Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 3- 40.

CHAPTER ONE

Glimpses of the Foreign in *Scenes of Clerical Life*

Introduction

Significantly, it was in Berlin in the winter of 1854-55 that George Eliot took a first tentative step towards writing fiction, when one evening she read to George Henry Lewes a sketch of an introductory chapter that she had written in the past. Perhaps the stimulus of her new foreign surroundings, as well as the new intimacy with Lewes, played a part in opening up the possibility of a new departure in her life as a writer. It was only later, eighteen months after her return to England, that she actually embarked on her first story 'The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton', and the result was more than satisfactory for her personal critic, Lewes. She finished her second story 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story' in the Scilly Isles, worked on the first part of 'Janet's Repentance' and finished it in Jersey. In one of her letters she gives an account of Jersey, pointing out that this place is 'very warm – which is just what I want. It is very pretty – a paradise of green vallies, but *disappointingly English* in habits and prices (*Letters*, II, p. 336-337, my italics). This single reference during the writing of her third story of her first work of fiction indicates a degree of discontent with Englishness that may be taken to imply a 'need for foreignness' in her life, as Barbara Hardy has termed it.¹ How far Eliot represents this in her writing will be the subject of my thesis, and this particular chapter will emphasise the ways in which her first three stories introduce foreignness into the closely-knit English community. Englishness is compared to, measured against, and checked by foreignness throughout her career, and the basis of this can be found in

her first work of fiction. Examining the first glimpses of the foreign at the beginning of Eliot's career will provide the basis for demonstrating its increasing thematic and structural importance in her later novels.

'The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton'

The first story opens with the image of Shepperton church, and the rural community is pictured gossiping about local subjects, in particular about the curate of that church, Amos Barton. Eliot's first main character Amos Barton is '[a]n utterly uninteresting character', leading an 'unheroic' life.² The significance of Eliot's use of such an unheroic hero rather than the superior figures of conventional fiction lies in the way that it invites her readers to extend their sympathies towards unexceptional people such as can be met anywhere and at any time in real life. Eliot subtly explains this approach within the story by pretending to reply to a reader who prefers the ideal in fiction. Mrs Farthingale, for instance, is accustomed to read stories with ideal characters, whereas in real life;

[...] it is so very large a majority of your fellow-countrymen that are of this insignificant stamp. At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise; their eyes are neither deep and liquid with sentiment, nor sparkling with suppressed witticisms: they have probably had no hairbreadth escapes or thrilling adventures; their brains are certainly not pregnant with genius, and their passions have not manifested themselves at all after the fashion of a volcano. *They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy*, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed (SCL. p. 80-81, my italics).

¹ Barbara Hardy, 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness'.

² George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life* ed. by David Lodge (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 80. Hereafter in parenthesis with page numbers. For discussion of Eliot's 'unheroic realism', see Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: a Study in Form* (London: University of London, 1963) and W. J. Harvey, *The Art of George Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

This idea of representing the life of ordinary characters who suffer failures, who are uninteresting and whose story has never been told before, is central to George Eliot's method of characterization, her descriptions and her use of the narrative voice in her novels, even though her later characters are not as commonplace as Amos Barton.³ The second point Eliot criticises in idealised characters is their one-sidedness, whereas the majority of her readers are 'simply men of complexions more or less muddy' who resist such simplification. As George Henry Lewes claimed in his letter to Blackwood, George Eliot's way of 'representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows, and troubles of other men' makes their life more realistic and brings the clergy closer to the community (*Letters*, II, p. 269). Indeed, in *Scenes of Clerical Life* Eliot examines the daily (secular) details of clerical life, and her sympathetic portrayal of these ordinary men also involves a significant element of the foreign in these provincial lives.

The setting in *Scenes of Clerical Life* in general presents a vivid image of rural England and also anticipates Eliot's later 'English' novels in which her concern with the negative effects of industrialization plays a greater role. There is, already here, an indication of the industrial activity that exists alongside the unspoilt pattern of English rural life,⁴ which as has been observed by many critics, tends to be equated in the nineteenth-century with pure Englishness.⁵ Eliot was brought up in the English countryside and

³ Eliot remarks on the 'false' approach of art in a discussion of realism in the Dutch school of painting in her essay 'The Natural History of German Life', which will be referred to also in later stages and chapters of this thesis.

⁴ For discussion of the thematic function of the rural setting see Alain Barrat, 'The Picture and the Message in George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*: The Thematic Function of Rural Setting', *GE-GHLS*, 30-31 (1996), 48-58.

⁵ This argument has been repeated by Raymond Williams and many other critics of cultural studies.

always retained a nostalgic attachment to the rural life from which she was in a sense exiled.⁶ She depicts rural life in fascinating detail, but she cannot be classified simply as a regional writer who 'concentrating on a particular part, a particular region of a nation, depicts the life of that region in such a way that the reader is conscious of the characteristics which are unique to that region and differentiate it from others in the common motherland'.⁷ Eliot is a universal novelist whose examination of regional elements, traditions, customs, and personalities in her fiction increasingly includes elements of the larger world and draws on her experience of foreign life.

Eliot's first work of fiction, hence, includes elements of the foreign, which play a significant role in the theme, plot and characters. For instance, Amos Barton's unimpressive oratory is likened to 'a Belgian railway-horn' (*SCL*. p. 60). The force of this simile is not easy to appreciate, but it is interesting that this first allusion to contemporary foreign life is a negative one. A few pages later, however, the situation has changed when Eliot introduces Amos Barton's religious identity: '[h]e was like an onion that has been rubbed with spices; the strong original odour was blended with *something new and foreign*. The Low-Church onion still offended refined High-Church nostrils, and *the new spice was unwelcome* to the palate of the genuine onion-eater' (*SCL*. p. 67). The allusion to the foreign here invokes something new, strange and dangerous for ordinary people, and Eliot implies that their resistance to it is misplaced.

⁶ Biographical evidence shows that Eliot always kept in touch with her rural acquaintances, and with members of her family, although her independent life after the death of her father, and her relationship with Lewes were not approved by her brother Isaac, who prohibited Eliot's contact with her family.

⁷ Phyllis Bentley, *The English Regional Novel* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941), p. 7. For Eliot's local connections, attachment to the Midlands and examination of regional elements see also Henry Auster, *Local Habitations: Regionalism in the Early Novels of George Eliot* (Harvard University Press, 1970), and Graham Handley, *George Eliot's Midlands: Passion in Exile* (London: Allison and Busby, 1991).

The cultural and social perspective on the foreign implied in this short reference is worth considering in the context of my argument, for it emphasises the exclusive feature of a culture for which the foreign is unwelcome whatever form it takes.

This implicitly critical comment on English life may suggest the potentially positive and widening effects of the foreign, but it is soon followed by Eliot's first negative foreign reference, with the introduction of Countess Czerlaski. Her role in this story is to emphasise the ambiguity of the foreign by presenting a parodic critique of the way in which the foreign can be used as a supposed mark of civilized accomplishment. The Countess, who has been to Paris and Germany with her husband in his lifetime, is the major external power, which leads to Amos Barton's downfall. Her conceited behaviour is exposed by contrast with Amos's dutiful wife Milly⁸:

[...] The ladies of rank and of luxurious habits, you know cannot be expected to surmise the details of poverty. She put a great deal of eau-de-Cologne on Mrs Barton's pocket-handkerchief, rearranged her pillow and footstool, kissed her cheeks, wrapped her in a soft shawl from her shoulders, and amused her with stories of the life she had seen *abroad* (SCL. p. 84).

The 'Countess's alleged scandalous cosmopolitanism', as Alain Barrat puts it, hints at the complexity of foreign experience, and the same image recurs in her later novels.⁹ Similarly Mrs Assher in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story' has experienced a similar type of shallow encounter with foreign countries: an experience which has not enlarged her as an individual at all, but has produced merely 'external polish' and arrogance. This

⁸ Amos Barton's wife Milly is presented as the opposite character to the Countess, selfless and devoted. Most of the time the narrative voice presents her in positive terms, yet her passivity is not necessarily approved of. Milly is selfless, but her world is too narrow as 'it is only through her husband that she is in any electric communication with the world beyond' (SCL. p. 100). She is not enlarged by any experience of a wider view, and in this sense, she resembles one kind of reader George Eliot clearly had in mind.

⁹ Alain Barrat, p. 48.

image of shallow cosmopolitanism is repeated in a more developed form in *Middlemarch* with Mr Brooke's memories of foreign countries, and in Eliot's last novel *Daniel Deronda*, where it is present in the opening scene around the gaming table at Leubronn, and in Grandcourt and Gwendolen's travels on the continent. In this incidental and understated way Eliot's focus on regional life is given a national and international dimension. Most of the time the connection of the regional to the universal highlights the enlarging and enlightening effect of the foreign in the long term. On other occasions, to avoid literary and cultural stereotypes Eliot uses the foreign ambiguously rather than representing it positively in all cases. Her realistic evaluation avoids drawing merely stereotypical images of foreigners and foreign life, while harshly criticising the shallow effects of foreign experience.

At the end when Amos and his children have to leave Shepperton after his wife Milly's early death, the parishioners feel sorry for them on their departure. A type of interaction, which Habermas suggests is a basic step in the process of coming to understand the other, occurs between Amos and his parishioners, who do not wish him to leave them. On another level, however, their reaction to his departure exposes their approach to anything foreign to their own confined world. Mrs Hackit's sorrow for the Bartons indicates the local attitude towards strangers and towards the manufacturing town that is to be Amos's new parish: '[...] a-going among strangers, and into a nasty town' (*SCL*. p. 113). Rural identity, as seen by Mrs Hackit, is based on a contrast with urban and industrial life. A similar provincial approach towards a new and unknown place is also repeated in the later novels; for example in *Adam Bede* both Lizbeth Bede and the Poyzers express doubts about living (and dying) in foreign places; and when there is speculation about Mr Bulstrode's future towards the end of *Middlemarch*, Mrs Bulstrode's neighbours pity her on the grounds that it will be hard 'for her to go among

foreigners' (*MM*. p. 744). The rural attitude towards the unknown and the foreign is expressed in direct speech in each case, and underlines the narrowness of provincial minds, for whom a change of English location can have the emotional impact of a journey to a foreign country. Implicitly Eliot's moral teaching as a writer calls for sympathy towards the foreign, for those who cannot be understood by the narrow minds of local inhabitants.

'Mr Gilfil's Love Story'

After the brief references to the foreign in the previous story, in the second of the stories, 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story', Eliot inserts a major foreign character into the English world. The setting is a grand English manor house; to which the heroine Caterina, an Italian orphan is transplanted at the age of three. After experiencing an unrequited love for Captain Wybrow, the heir of the manor, she eventually marries the clergyman Mr Gilfil. The foreignness of Caterina is a central feature of the story and the other characters are drawn in relation to her foreignness in one way or another.

The different levels of the foreign can be ascertained from the first references to Caterina, which point to the racial and cultural differences implied in her nationality. The interaction between Englishness and the foreign is indicated through Caterina's installation into English life, in which her role is ambiguous since it is not clear that her presence enriches the life of the local community. Yet it can be said that through Caterina's interaction with English life, Eliot and her reader are able to take measure of it by explicating and questioning English manners. Even though Caterina's characterization is not fully developed to represent her national identity, unlike Eliot's last heroine Mirah, all the distinguishing (stereotypical) features of the foreign are ascribed to Caterina, who is identified with the foreign till the end. In the early pages

local people remember her even many years after her death, as someone who ‘looked like a “*furriner*, wi’ such eyes, you can’t think, an’ a voice as went through you when she sung at church”’ (SCL. p. 130). The dialogue here is between a relative newcomer Mr Hackit, and one of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood Mrs. Patten, who tells Mrs Gilfil’s story by stressing her foreignness. This following passage is significant for illustrating George Eliot’s presentation of the attitudes of ordinary rural English people towards the foreign.

[Mr Gilfil] looked rare an’ happy that Sunday, but somehow, I’d a feelin’ as it wouldn’t last long. I’ve no opinion o’ *furriners*, Mr. Hackit, for I’ve travelled i’ their country wi’ my lady in my time, an’ seen anuff o’ their victuals an’ their nasty ways.’

‘Mrs. Gilfil come from It’ly, didn’t she?’

‘I reckon she did, but I niver could rightly hear about that. Mr. Gilfil was niver to be spoke to about her, and nobody else hereabout knowed anythin’. Howiver, she must ha’ come over pretty young, for she spoke *English* as well as you an’ me. It’s them Italians as has such fine voices, an’ Mrs. Gilfil sung, you never hearded the like’ (SCL. p. 131, my italics).

The conversation reveals the typically narrow provincial outlook towards everything foreign. Foreign people, foreign countries and foreign religions are looked upon with suspicion. Mrs Patten ascribes nasty ways to foreigners in general and yet associates Italians with fine voices. In this sense, she distinguishes between different features of the foreign and can admire Italian singing, even though she does not trust foreigners in general. Englishness for her is identified with language and she appreciates Caterina’s use of English like ‘you an’ me’. What makes Caterina sympathetic for the local people is the fact that she speaks English, and this counters the generalized hostility to foreigners.

The stereotypical attitudes of the local people are subtly given through their dialogue rather than by the narrator’s comments, creating a rich sense of a general reaction to the

foreign. The gardener of the manor house Mr Bates is also shown to be concerned about Caterina's presence in the house:

[...T]o bring a *furrin* child into the coonthry [...] it'll coom to soom harm. The first sitiatiion iver I held – it was a hold hancient habbey, wi' the biggest orchard o'apples an' pears you ever see – there was a French valet, an' he stool silk stoockins, an' shirts, an' rings, an' iverythin' he could ley his hands on, an' run away at last wi' th' missis's jewl-box. *They're all alaike, them furriners. It roons i' th' blood'* (SCL, p. 154-55, my italics).

Of all the provincial reactions Mr Bates's attitude is the most hostile. He is singularly lacking in sympathy and tolerance towards the foreign and sees foreigners as all alike and dangerous both culturally and racially. In his reaction the cultural exclusion of the 'other' embraces a racial one, and thus foreigners are totally denied ^{any} ~~any~~ good qualities whatsoever. In Bates's view all foreigners invite suspicion whatever their nationality. Eliot strikingly continues the dialogue with the 'liberal' view of Mrs Sharp, who judges her Lady to be right in bringing this child to 'the true religion' in England. Significantly, Mrs. Sharp's tolerant perspective is also based on her understanding of religion and her conviction that Protestantism is indeed the 'true religion'. In this sense foreigners are still suspect, yet they are allowed to enter into English life as long as they are taught the true religion. The local inhabitants are shown to believe that only they have a grasp of the truth in a cultural, racial or religious sense. A similar subjectivity in relation to religion will be seen in *Felix Holt*, where Mrs Transome's significant reaction to her son's changed perceptions dismisses the other religion, Islam by stressing the superiority of her own. In *Middlemarch*, too, there are similar minor references of this

kind mainly by the rector's wife Mrs Cadwalladar, who is another representative of narrow provincialism.¹⁰

Apart from the recollections quoted above, Caterina is regarded as physiologically and culturally 'other' throughout the story. The geographical difference between the countries of the north and those of the south where Caterina was born is the first means of highlighting her distinctive features:

How came she to be there? How was it that this tiny, *dark-eyed child of the south*, whose face was immediately suggestive of *olive-covered hills* and taper-lit shrines, came to have her home in that stately *English* manor-house, by the side of the blonde matron, Lady Cheverel – almost as if a humming-bird were found perched on one of the elm-trees in the park, by the side of her ladyship's handsomest pouter-pigeon? Speaking good *English*, too and joining in Protestant prayers (*SCL*. p. 147, my italics).

Her physical features are associated with her geographical origins, and extended to suggest national and religious identities. Foreignness is attributed to her physical appearance and particularly to her black eyes and to her voice. The complexity of Caterina's identity embodies aspects of both countries and cultures. The 'olive covered-hills' of Italy where she was born are juxtaposed to her English home and its surrounding parkland and her exotic qualities are defined in terms of nature and landscape. The English manor-house where she is transplanted is a problematized home in that Caterina stands in direct contrast physically to blonde Lady Cheverel.

In the later stages of the story the theme of the foreign is handled on another level through the narrator's comments on the intentions of the Cheverels. The idea that

¹⁰ During the discussions about Dorothea's second marriage, Mrs Cadwalladar refers to Hindoos, and differentiates her religion and herself from them. 'It is lawful to marry again, I suppose, else we might as well be Hindoos instead of Christians', (*MM*. p. 549).

Caterina has come to participate in Protestant life in England recurs in the narrative description here. England, its life and religion are seen by the Cheverels as unquestioningly superior, but the narrator's skilful use of free indirect speech exposes their assumptions to ironic qualification:

[...W]ould be a Christian work to train this little Papist into *a good Protestant*, and graft as much English fruit as possible on the Italian stem [... Sir Christopher] loved children, and took at once to the little black-eyed monkey – his name for Caterina [...] but neither he nor Lady Cheverel had any idea of adopting her as their daughter, and giving her their own rank in life. They were much *too English and aristocratic* to think of anything so romantic (SCL. p. 152, my italics).

The Cheverels represent the characteristic prejudices of their nation and their class – Protestant Englishness is contrasted with the suspect Papism of Italy – and their charity is shown to have limitations defined by this sense of nationality and aristocratic station. The attitude of the Cheverels thus indicates that the local representatives of Englishness, regardless of their class, share similar views of the foreign. Eliot clearly reveals the sameness of the different classes in their approach towards the foreign by showing that even the Cheverels, who are well disposed to foreign culture, have no intention of adopting Caterina.

The local people speak not only about Sir Christopher bringing Caterina home as his ward, but also about his architectural project, which has a significant foreign dimension. Mr Warren says that '[y]ou're likely to have more foreigners, [...] for Sir Christopher has engaged some Italian workmen to help in the alterations in the house' (SCL. p. 155). The local people believe that such actions are likely to interrupt the routine process of their life, and the foreign will bring something harmful to their narrow world. The alterations in the house are determined by Sir Christopher's interest in foreign cultures

and involve both his class and his national identity. In this sense he is differentiated from the working class members of the rural world.

Eliot describes how the manor house and its long corridors have foreign architectural and ornamental elements.

[Caterina] had made her way along the cloistered passages [...] the bright moonlight was streaming through the windows, throwing into strange light and shadow the heterogeneous objects that lined the long walls: Greek statues and busts of Roman emperors; low cabinets filled with curiosities, natural and antiquarian; tropical birds and huge horns of beasts; Hindoo gods and strange shells [...] (*SCL*. p. 144).

These heterogeneous objects imply connections with other parts of the world even in this most English and aristocratic house and may indicate the curiosity of the citizens of a growing imperial power about the exotic aspects of the foreign. Sir Christopher Cheverel, who is thought to have the 'best blood in England', is also the one individual who has positive interactions with the foreign, who visits Italy, brings up an Italian girl and has his house altered and filled with foreign objects (*SCL*. p. 158). Nevertheless his use of the foreign is open to question in so far as his religious, class and national identity is not altered by his encounters. The foreign is no more than an object to give him pleasure

Apart from the references to her culture, nationality and religion, the images used to define Caterina single her out as foreign, as the 'other' in an individual sense. The comparison of her to animals and birds is particularly revealing.¹¹ Sir Christopher calls her pet names such as 'singing-bird' and 'little-monkey' and she is also likened to a kitten, a frog, a stock-dove, a puppy, a grass-hopper and a mouse. These images define

her as 'appealing, vulnerable, attractive in an unconventional way, somewhat wild and untamed, slightly odd and out of place, foreign, of low birth'.¹² They also signify that she is weak, underdeveloped both physically and mentally, and more an object of patronising charity than an individual.¹³ 'The little southern bird had its northern nest lined with tenderness, and caresses, and pretty things' (*SCL*. p. 158). If other aspects of her foreignness such as language are to a large extent integrated into English life, Caterina physically remains foreign until the end.

At the same time Caterina is always remembered for her musical talent, which transforms her position into an active one. At the beginning, through her talent she 'conquered all prejudices against her foreign blood' (*SCL*. p. 157). Thus, besides her gift for language, Caterina's ear for music consolidates her integration into English life. Racial prejudices are altered, and she is even admired by the most English audience of Miss and Mrs. Assher: 'while she was singing she was queen of the room' (*SCL*. p. 174). In addition to the recollections of the rural people at the beginning, Lady Assher's reaction also significantly emphasises Caterina's voice. She says: 'All Italians sing so beautifully. I travelled in Italy with Sir John when we were first married, and we went to Venice, where they go about in gondolas, you know [...]' (*SCL*. p. 172). The narrative voice, however, allows Mrs Assher to make only silly and shallow comments on a country she has merely visited, and in ironically exposing her limitations and those of the Cheverels, Eliot criticises stereotypical images and indicates to her readers the need for a deeper understanding of, and sympathy towards other cultures.

¹¹ See Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot*, pp. 202-4.

¹² David Lodge, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 'Introduction', p. 26.

While foreignness is attributed to Caterina, Englishness is related to all of the other main characters. Captain Wybrow, in particular, is one of the most English characters in the story. In contrast to Caterina, he is introduced with emphasis on his small white hands and English looks in ‘all the striking contrast of their colouring’ (*SCL*. p. 146). The physical features of the Captain are crucial to his own sense of identity: Nature ‘had given him an admirable figure, the whitest hands, the most delicate of nostrils, and a large amount of self-satisfaction’ (*SCL*. p. 164). White hands are also the symbol of narrow Englishness and the English figures which represent it in the later novels. In *Adam Bede* Arthur Donnithorne is another white-handed delicate English figure, who is also of the upper class and an heir.¹⁴ Arthur, indeed, seems to be an extended study of Captain Wybrow both physically and psychologically. Sir James Chettam in *Middlemarch* and Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda* both have white hands, and the latter is Eliot’s most critical portrayal of upper-class Englishness and its arrogant selfishness. In ‘Mr Gilfil’s Love Story’, however, the physical aspects of Englishness are used ironically to highlight the racial and social differences between the Captain and Caterina.

With Captain Wybrow Eliot also introduces the theme of inheritance and its effects on the individual. As heir to Sir Christopher Cheverel his role in the story is to make a suitable match by marrying Miss Assher. Captain Wybrow is not given a chance to

¹³ Andrew Thompson, in his *George Eliot and Italy* says that the ‘prejudice against foreign blood is deflected, submerged in a reconstitution of the identity of the child as a ‘household pet’, an identity which implies an owner’, p. 55.

¹⁴ For racial construction of identity see Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), see also Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

grow, his personality is presented disapprovingly and he is shown as selfish and subservient to Sir Christopher's expectations.¹⁵ Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel are criticised for their satisfaction with him, they 'thought him the best of nephews, the most satisfactory of heirs, full of grateful deference to themselves, and above all things, guided by a sense of duty. [...] He dressed expensively, because it was a duty he owed to his position; from a sense of duty he adapted himself to Sir Christopher's inflexible will' (*SCL*. p. 164). His sense of duty is motivated by false moral aims in that he plays with the feelings of Caterina and then leaves her in order to take the hand of Miss Assher as Sir Christopher expects him to do. He lacks sympathy for the feelings of others and appears in a particularly bad light when he urges Sir Christopher to promote the marriage of Caterina and Mr Gilfil. His actions are governed entirely by his narrow ambition to inherit, and this narrowness is associated with the Englishness emphasized in his appearance. In a similar manner to Captain Wybrow, Arthur manipulates Hetty in *Adam Bede* for the sake of securing his inheritance. Other similar figures are Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner* and Fred Vincy in *Middlemarch*, who demonstrate the negative effects of inheritance. While Godfrey is given a chance to recognise his selfishness and unsympathetic action towards his child in the past, Fred is saved from the narrowness that comes from expecting inheritance by his encounter with the Garth family.

Mr Gilfil is a neutral character in many points: in this sense, he is more of a universal figure than a regional one. He is the only character in the story who does not stress Caterina's foreignness. He is already prepared for what may come as a consequence of Caterina's love, and even tries to teach her about judging others. He has a larger mind

¹⁵ Andrew Lynn, "'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story' and the Critique of Kantism", *The Victorian Newsletter*, 95

and vision through which he evaluates the issues from a broader perspective, even though his encounter with the foreign in the person of Caterina is a painful one. He seems to be the first example in a line of characters, such as Adam Bede and Daniel Deronda, who try to save those they love from their own narrow understanding. Adam Bede warns Hetty about Arthur's immoral and unfaithful flirtation and suffers under the burden of losing her. Daniel Deronda also makes an effort to help Gwendolen. On a different level Mr Gilfil shares a similar experience with Lydgate, who experiences a painful love affair with a foreign actress during his stay in Paris. Thus Mr Gilfil combines two types of characters who are to be developed in different ways in the later novels; one is the man who teaches, like Adam Bede and Daniel Deronda, the other is the man who suffers from his love for a foreigner, like Lydgate. In each case the encounter with the foreign – either in the metaphorical or the literal sense – is crucial for the future of the character. After the Captain's sudden death, Mr Gilfil tries to console Caterina, saying that 'if we knew ourselves, we should not judge each other harshly' (*SCL*. p. 236). For Mr Gilfil sympathy comes from knowing ourselves. To sympathize with the pains of the other creates the possibility of widening our own nature, and, this circular learning process enacted in the fiction widens the sympathies of the reader.

Conclusion

The role of the foreign is crucial in Eliot's first two stories, even though it is not given as much space as in the later novels.¹⁶ *Scenes of Clerical Life* is centrally concerned with widening the sympathies of the reader, and it does so by presenting the foreign and its effects on the local people, despite their suspicious attitude to all things foreign. Characters do not undergo a process of enlarged understanding and enlightenment directly related to the foreign in this work, but these first glimpses of the foreign in English life anticipate what is to be developed more fully and explored more fully in the works that follow it. The Countess, for example, represents a shallow perception of the foreign, while Caterina's foreignness and Captain Wybrow's Englishness are important elements that will be developed in the later novels. The foreign in a cultural, religious, and geographical sense brings about alterations in English life, both through Caterina and through the architectural redesign of the manor house, while there are different shades of Englishness, ranging from the aristocratic cultural relativism of the Cheverels to the narrow self-centredness of Captain Wybrow. English life in this work includes minor examples of the foreign, which will be developed, challenged and problematized in the later novels.

¹⁶ The third story, 'Janet's Repentance' makes little direct reference to the foreign, while charting the heroine's moral growth through an extension of sympathy brought about by her encounter with Mr Tryan and his very different religious outlook. There are brief references to the foreign, in terms of language which criticise the shallow experience of the ladies: 'The conversation is sometimes quite literary, for there is a flourishing book-club, and many of the younger ladies have carried their studies so far as to have forgotten a little German', (*SCL*. p. 253). The idea of race is also briefly touched upon, when the lawyer Dempster calls his wife Janet 'Gypsy', which was 'his name for his dark eyed wife when he was in an extraordinarily good humour', (*SCL*. p. 298). Gypsy is not simply an allusion to a dark complexion, for Dempster's use of the term indicates the general tendency of provincial people to relate the colour of the skin to personality. The gypsy image recurs in *The Mill on the Floss* in the case of Maggie when it is again used as a metaphor for physical and mental difference, while Dempster is also the first in a line of despotic white male characters which includes Tom Tulliver and Grandcourt.

CHAPTER TWO

Sympathy in *Adam Bede***Introduction**

After writing to Blackwood that she was planning a novel which was to be ‘a country story – full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay’, Eliot started to work on her first novel in Richmond on 22 October 1857 (*Letters*, II, p. 381). She finished the first volume in England, wrote the second in Germany, and completed the novel back in England on 16th November 1858, which hints that her visit to Germany might have been beneficial in the writing of her novel of rural English life. As can be noticed from her letters and journal she observed new forms of life, collected material, and in general, was inspired by the life abroad. Before setting off for Germany, Eliot explained (in a letter to Sara Sophia Hennell), the aim of her trip with Lewes, emphasising the educative potential of foreign travel by claiming that ‘we lay in much more capital in the shape of knowledge and experience by going abroad’ (*Letters*, II, p. 423). The impact of her experience of Germany in this particular period, and of the other countries she visited, in general was mixed, for she was filled with both admiration and dislike for different aspects of life abroad, but in the long term travel and the encounter with foreign life that it afforded had a stimulating effect on her productivity.

On the way to Munich, a two-day stop at Nürnberg delighted her, presenting a spectacle of both diversity and individuality. Eliot’s devotion to individuality, both in social and architectural matters, is obvious in her observation of Nürnberg. She did not write a ‘Nürnberg novel’, as Lewes had thought she might, as a product of her experience of this ‘town of towns’, but she expressed her admiration in her private notes for the

architectural and social structure of the town. She wrote to Sara Hennell describing the town in terms of its gradual development as 'a real medieval town, which has grown up with the life of a community'. As a result of this gradual change, the architectural style of Nürnberg is marked by a distinct and enlivening individuality. 'Every house has a physiognomy – there is no end to the *varieties* which the vista of every street presents – but it is a variety like Nature's, showing general unity presiding over *an endless play of individual variety*' (*Letters*, II, p. 451, my italics). Variety, reached through a gradual process of evolution, is necessary and does not interrupt the overall form of unity. She repeats similar opinions on Nürnberg in her journal, referring, in particular, to the variety of the houses, 'though a beautiful family likeness ran through them all'.¹ This combination of variety and homogeneity is the mark of a richly organic community in which individuality can flourish, and it shows Eliot's historical consciousness at work. The same principle can be extended to social, cultural, racial and national issues, where a type of synthesis between various groups is achieved through interaction and encounter with one another. The opposite of this leads either to mass homogeneity, which excludes every form of otherness, or marginal fractions which disturb the harmony of the whole. The same idea of 'family likeness' is significantly repeated in her essay on 'The Natural History of German Life' where she analyses Riehl's ideas about German peasants. From another and contemporary point of view Eliot's understanding of community as including and encouraging individuality, while at the same time retaining a general likeness, can be contrasted to Foucault's anxiety that sympathy may reduce the community to a homogeneous mass. Eliot, unlike Foucault, believes that variety and sameness can coexist fruitfully in the gradual development of

¹ *Journals of George Eliot*, ed. by Margaret Harris and J. Johnston, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 307.

things – whether individual beings, architectural structures, or nations. Nürnberg is the finest model of this kind of gradual development.

On the other hand, Eliot's experience of the Bavarian city of Munich was rather different. In her letters and journals she expresses a dislike of the weather and the architecture in Munich whose 'huge, expensive, ugly buildings', are compared unfavourably with Nürnberg, which had 'no uniform barrack-like lines of houses' (*Letters*, II, p. 452). Even though in Munich she and Lewes socialised with German professors in an intellectual environment – though it was mainly G. H. Lewes who talked with them – visited art galleries and attended operas, she found the city in general 'distasteful' and the community not sincere. As she describes her impressions of the intellectual milieu in Munich to Sara Hennell, she says that 'happily there is such a colony of North Germans among the educated people that one hopes there may be a gradual modification through their influence' (*Letters*, II, p. 455). The observation is significant in that it again reveals Eliot's belief in gradual change. Just as she admires the gradual social and architectural changes in Nürnberg since medieval times, she hopes that people from the North Germany may influence and change the 'distasteful' social milieu in Munich. It is also significant that she sees outsiders, the North Germans, as having the power to bring about that change in the local culture by introducing new forms of behaviour and exercising a civilizing influence. Another experience in Germany is also crucial in Eliot's understanding of the value of cultural variety and the kind of tolerance it can promote. In her letters, she mentions Professor Martins and the mixed religious practices in his family with great admiration. The Professor's wife and two daughters are Catholic, but his son has been brought up as Protestant without impairing the harmony of family life. Variety and individuality are qualities that Eliot valued highly, and, in her novels as in real life, she is critical of uniformity. For her,

individuality is a goal for each character to aspire to, and such individuality makes society richer and more tolerant. These views can be seen to play a part in the novel she was writing as a 'country story' of English life. My reading of *Adam Bede* will emphasise how the details of rural life show Eliot's commitment to binding individuals into a complex relationship with the picturesque and social landscape, and how in this process traces of her foreign experience can be discerned.

Eliot opens the novel by adopting the approach of 'the Egyptian sorcerer': '[w]ith a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader'.² In the first drop of the ink, Eliot shows Adam Bede, a carpenter in the middle of a hard-working day in his workshop. English rural life and its representative character, Adam, are introduced through the mirror of a foreign sorcerer, and thus, with playful self-consciousness, a foreign element is brought into English life at the beginning. There is another reference to the foreign when Adam is described in this scene 'as if he has come straight out of a Rubens painting,' such as Eliot greatly admired.³ Eliot's realistic imagination seems to have been fed by the 'real, breathing men and women' that she encountered, particularly in Munich, in paintings of Dutch life by Rubens and others, as she writes in a letter to Sara Sophia Hennell: 'What grand, glowing, forceful thing life looks in his pictures – the men such grand bearded grappling beings fit to do work of the world, the women such real mothers' (*Letters*, II, p. 451). Her picture of the English scene conjured up from the drop of ink is vividly drawn to make her characters as real as in life. She dramatises the interaction of living and breathing people in the rural world rather than presenting artificial and idyllic pictures of artisans such as she had

² *Adam Bede* ed. by Valentine Cunningham (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 5. Further references to this edition will be given within the text.

criticized in her essay 'The Natural History of German Life'.⁴ The significant parallels between the images in *Adam Bede* and her ideas in the essay 'The Natural History of German Life' have been noted by various critics, though they will be repeated here to elucidate Eliot's approach to the function of art.⁵ In her essay, Eliot traces Riehl's social-political conservatism in which society is seen as incarnate history. He maintains that 'what has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws. The external conditions which society has inherited from the past are but the manifestation of inherited internal conditions in the human beings who compose it; the internal conditions and the external are related to each other as the organism and its medium, and development can take place only by the gradual consentaneous development of both' (*Essays*, p. 127). The mutual influence of the organism and its medium can be applied to any development process, and art and the artist can intervene in this process by the extension and 'awakening of social sympathies' for uninteresting figures as well as for the alien and the foreign (*Essays*, p. 111). In her essay Eliot complains about the prevailing lack of sympathy and understanding for marginal groups: 'how little the real characteristics of the working

³ Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), p. 197.

⁴ Art, as Eliot puts it in a famous passage, is 'the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life. It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions – about the manners and conversations of beaux and duchesses; but it is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false object instead of the true one', (p. 110). *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin, 1990). Further references to this edition will be given within the text, abbreviated as *Essays*.

⁵ To name a few of these critics, A. G. Van den Broek, 'Adam Bede and Riehl's "Social-Political-Conservatism,"' *GEFR*, 17 (1986), 42-61. Broek argues that Eliot's 'depiction of peasantry, despite Wordsworth's influence, is not at all romanticized', rather Adam Bede renders Riehl's 'social-political-conservatism', (p. 46). M. J. Corbett, takes another line and suggests that for Eliot, 'Riehl establishes his authority as a natural historian by being a faithful observer; she does not, however, consider what ways those observations may have been affected by any number of things – preconditioned expectations, unconscious ideas, or prior studies that he might have read or written', Mary Jean Corbett, 'Representing the Rural: The Critique of Loamshire in *Adam Bede*', *Studies in the Novel*, 20:3 (1988), 288-30, (p. 290). Susan Graver, observes that Eliot's 'aesthetic observations are predicated on social concerns, and the realism she came to practice is committed to a renewal of community', p. 28.

classes are known to those who are outside them, how little their natural history has been studied, is sufficiently disclosed by our Art as well as by our political and social theories' (*Essays*, p. 108). These exclusions, Eliot stresses, lead only to knowledge of those who are dominant, and homogeneously the same, with the result that sympathy and understanding between different groups are lessened.

In her first full novel, she presents her realistic vision of rural English life in the Midlands, which had not received much attention from English novelists before.⁶ She encourages different classes and cultures to have real knowledge of one another through real observations rather than through artificial descriptions or the stereotypical images that are to be commonly found in art, in politics and in society. She neither ignores nor idealises the characteristics of the people she creates, and thus presents a realistic image reflected in the mirror of her mind, as she puts it in a celebrated passage in Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*. In this chapter, 'in which the story pauses a little', Eliot particularly talks about the duty of a novelist among other artists, and discusses the ways in which 'a clever novelist' creates her characters. She says:

If I were a clever novelist, not obliged to creep servilely after nature and fact, but able to represent things as they never have been and never will be [...]. But [...] I have no such lofty vocation, and that I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed; the reflection faint or confused [...] (*AB*. p. 175).

Her ironic allusion to 'a clever novelist' stresses the difference between the novelist who creates artificial images and Eliot herself, who aims to give a 'faithful account' of objects observed by her eyes and evaluated in her mind. In this sense, she attempts to unsettle the ideological assumptions of her contemporary readers who were mostly

middle-class. The image of the mirror is a conventional emblem of realism but Eliot's reference to it is carefully considered and qualified. She plays in a sense with the dual aspects of reality to question her own authority in the novel. She is well-aware that human vision, which mirrors factual images in the mind, is inevitably partial and 'defective'. In other words, the subjectivity of the writer is unavoidable. This may help to explain the reasons for the ambiguous treatment of some subjects that I shall be focusing on in the later novels. The reflection in the mirror of the mind may include more, and potentially conflicting, points of view than the single narrow perspective. Eliot's awareness that art in general can be defective makes her vision larger and multi-dimensional. Hence, she becomes more tolerant to the figures who are ignored by the idealistic imagination, portraying those who have been ignored for being uninteresting and common as well as those who are considered to be alien and foreign by the majority, since both exist and live in the same society.

Sympathy, Eliot repeats insistently, must be engaged not only for the picturesque beauties of life, but also for those who are ugly, who are not like us.

But, bless us, things may be lovable that are not altogether handsome, I hope? I am not at all sure that the majority of the human race have not been ugly, and even among those 'lords of their kind,' *the British*, squat figures, ill-shapen nostrils, and dingy complexions are not startling exceptions. [...] All honour and reverence to the divine beauty of form! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children – in our gardens and in our houses. But let us love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret proportion, but in the secret of *deep human sympathy* [...] In this world there are so many of these common, coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness! It is so needful we should *remember their existence*, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only *fit a world of extremes* (*AB*. p. 177-178, my italics).⁷

⁶ See M. J. Corbett, and Dianne F. Sadoff, 'Nature's Language: Metaphor in the Text of *Adam Bede*', *Genre*, 11 (1978), 411-426.

⁷ Eliot starts this passage by stressing the need to tolerate and pity everybody including those common people who live among us, and those who are different from us. 'These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their

Sympathy, extended and awakened by any form of art, brings understanding and tolerance towards other human beings, no matter what their race, nation, culture or religion, and Eliot is ironic about the pretensions to superiority of the British, those 'lords of their kind' then at the height of their imperial power. In order to avoid creating 'a world of extremes', she stresses the need to love 'that other beauty too'. Eliot foresees the possibility of 'lofty theories' which lead only to a world of extremes by increasing the polarisation of different groups. This point she makes at the beginning of her career recurs in all her novels, and reaches its climax in *Daniel Deronda* which, in addressing the issues of the 1860s and 1870s, has much to say that is pertinent to our present world. Eliot aims to combat the prejudices of her readers, seeking, in her own words, 'to widen English vision a little' throughout her writing (*Letters*, VI, p. 304). Expansion of human sympathies, openness to the lives and thoughts of people beyond our own are issues at the heart of the debate about the canon and multiculturalism – and George Eliot is, in this respect, ahead of her time.

The Diversity of Rural Life

In *Adam Bede* Eliot chooses to write about the rural life and ordinary people of the midlands she knew from her childhood, but at the same time she embroiders her 'country story' with references to the wider world. The rural life she depicts in this novel does not homogenise social forms and relationships; it rather seems to diversify and variegate them before harmonising them at the end. She observes and reveals the

dispositions; and it is these people – among whom your life is passed – That it is needful you should tolerate, pity and love [...] So I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. [...] The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin – the longer the

characteristic details of rural life listed above, but she also forms every major character with a different, unique attribute, which differentiates him or her as an individual.

The description of Adam, in his workshop, combines his physiology with his personality. Adam is strong, and has dark eyes and hair, mixed blood and honest intelligence. The level of his strength is equal to his honesty and intelligence. The physiological features are harmonised by his mental distinctiveness.

The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad finger-tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was *a Saxon*, and justified his name; but *the jet-black-hair*, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen *glance of the dark* eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent, and mobile eyebrows, indicated *a mixture of Celtic blood*. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured honest intelligence (*AB. p. 6, my italics*).

Eliot here describes her character in terms of blood and physiological differences, which might show the influence of G. H. Lewes, who was working on his *The Physiology of Common Life* at the time Eliot was writing this novel. One of the first illustrations of Eliot's fondness for 'a mixture of blood' is seen in her hero of English peasant life. His Englishness involves a combination of different inheritances, the Celtic as well as the Saxon, and suggests the value of variety as opposed to uniformity. Indeed, all the principal characters of this novel, including Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty, are introduced in the whole harmony of their physical and psychological idiosyncrasy. Physical and racial differences are also prominent in the depiction of minor characters, such as Mrs Irvine, with her rich-toned complexion, her *dark face*, with its delicate aquiline nose, firm proud mouth, and *small intense black eye*, is so keen and sarcastic in

claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion' (*AB. pp. 176-7*).

its expression that you instinctively substitute a pack of cards for the chess-men, and imagine *her telling your fortune*' (*AB*. p. 55). The image of the fortune-teller with dark face and black eyes recalls the Egyptian sorcerer at the beginning of the novel.

Adam continues to develop in both his career and identity throughout the novel, gradually changing from the honest, but immature young carpenter to the mature man.⁸ During this process of development, rootedness and continuity are qualities he exemplifies. He is responsive to his surroundings, to the land and the community. He is tied to his community but not with narrow ties for his loyalty to his roots is rather a questioning one. He has an inquiring mind and can create his own terms rather than accepting the common codes of the community: 'He had run away once when he was only eighteen [...] his "mensuration book in his pocket" and saying to himself very decidedly that he could bear the vexations of home no longer – he would go and seek his fortune, setting up his stick at the crossways and bending his steps the way it fell' (*AB*. p. 48). Adam's questioning of his roots has lead him to try to escape from the familiar and embrace the unknown, as Maggie will do in *The Mill on the Floss* when she runs away to the gypsies. However, his reasons for returning home are different. He recognises that his desire to escape from troubles is selfishness, and will 'make a poor balance'. Adam's thoughts are given in his own words and are forceful in their earthy colloquialism: 'A pig may poke his nose into the trough and think o'nothing outside it; but if you've got a man's heart and soul in you, you can't be easy a making your own bed an'leaving the rest to lie on the stones' (*AB*. p. 49). Adam's love and sympathy for his mother and brother ultimately prevent him from going into exile, and his loyalty to his roots is stronger from the questioning he has subjected them to.

⁸ See also Josephine McDonagh, *George Eliot* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p. 23.

There are other details which indicate Adam's openness to a wider world: his knowledge of geography and economics. In the course of a conversation on the best place to live, Adam compares the South of England to the North. He would not like to live in the South where

[...] it's as flat as the back o'your hand, and you can see nothing of a distance, without climbing up the highest trees. I couldn't abide that: I like to go to work by a road that'll take me up a bit of a hill, and see the fields for miles round me, and a bridge, or a town, or a bit of a steeple here and there. It makes you feel *the world's a big place, and there's other men working in it* with their heads and hands besides yourself (AB. p. 120, my italics).

Adam's choice of the country he would like to live in points up his approach towards life and people in general. He wants to feel the presence of other people and be part of a broad and varied geographical panorama. The flat landscape of the South does not allow one to see the distance. In this sense, Adam's ideas on geographical variety are parallel to those of Eliot when she compares Nürnberg to Munich and prefers its architectural diversity.

Adam's physical and moral strength is brought out more fully in the climactic scene in which (at the suggestion of Lewes) he confronts the most English looking character of the novel, Arthur Donnithorne. Eliot recalls in her journal that 'the fight came to me as a necessity one night at the Munich opera when I was listening to *William Tell* ('History of *Adam Bede*,' in *Letters*, II, p. 504).⁹ Eliot's German experience may thus have some direct bearing on the fight between Adam and Arthur. Significantly, it is a heroic foreign figure that inspires this scene, in which Adam confronts a character defined by

⁹ Eliot's inspiration might also be based on her knowledge of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* thematically, as both William and Adam are simple men, having massive size and natural strength. For Schiller's possible

his narrow and ultimately limited Englishness.¹⁰ Different levels of Englishness are represented by Arthur and Adam. Arthur Donnithorne has been portrayed as a possible model of an English gentleman in terms of his appearance and of his manners. Unlike Adam, who has a mixture of Celtic blood, Arthur is portrayed as racially and culturally single, a pure Englishman. He has been ironically introduced earlier as ‘the young squire’, ‘the heir’, and ‘the captain’. These names define his personality as embodying a form of arrogant Englishness a ‘tawny-whiskered, brown-lockered, *clear-complexioned young Englishman* whom you have met with in a foreign town, and been proud of as a fellow-countryman – well-washed, high-bred, white-handed [...]’ (*AB*. p. 61, my italics). Arthur’s ‘white hands’ are the major sign of his class and his personality; they indicate high breeding, though with a suggestion of decadence, whereas Adam’s hands are the tools of his craft and evidence of his strength and his honesty. Eliot’s disapproval of Arthur’s personality has parallels in her letters where she reproves English travellers abroad, and in this light her naming of Arthur as an Englishman one can be proud of abroad ironically recalls precisely the opposite. In a letter to Mrs. Charles Bray Eliot states that ‘[...] the English abroad are always English who decline to know fellow-countrymen without prestige’ (*Letters*, II, p. 500). In Arthur’s case prestige is emphasised by his outlook and by his white hands throughout the novel, but these marks of prestige are shown up to be mostly superficial, and the kind of unthinking deference to such ‘prestige’ shown by English travellers abroad is what this novel challenges and undermines.

impact on Eliot’s works see Deborah Guth, ‘George Eliot and Schiller: Narrative Ambivalence in *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*’, *The Modern Language Review*, 94 (1999), 913-924.

¹⁰ The heroic action of Rossini’s *William Tell* in a pastoral setting seems to be adapted by Eliot to English rural life in her creation of a hero who fights for honesty and honour in love. The fight is set in the woods, and in this way, the scene is suggestively associated with the identity of Adam himself, with his craft as a carpenter and his naturalness as a man. The legendary William Tell, who was asked to shoot the apple on his son’s head, was not rewarded with his freedom but instead sent into exile, although he succeeded in doing what was required. Similarly, Adam cannot win Hetty’s love, even if he wins the fight against Arthur, and yet in this case, it is Arthur who is ultimately sent into ‘exile’.

The paradoxical values of the dominant class can be seen in Arthur's relation to Adam. Arthur has been trusted by his tenants and the other people of Hayslope, whom he 'outshone [...] as the planet Jupiter outshines the Milky Way' (*AB*. p. 61). For Adam particularly, Arthur has been the model of a good landlord and a friend. After Adam discovers Arthur's wrongdoing with Hetty, he reflects bitterly that '*a gentleman, with his fine manners and fine clothes, and his white hands*, and that way o' talking gentlefolks have, came about her, making up to her in a bold way, as a man couldn't do that was only her equal' (*AB*. p. 324, my italics). The jealousy Arthur's love-making to Hetty arouses makes him reconsider the values and norms created and imposed by Arthur's class, and there is a note of contempt in the way that he refers to Arthur's high manners, white hands and fine language.

Arthur's sense of superiority is conveyed early in the novel by an image he uses to describe his relationship to Adam. Talking to Mr Irvine he says:

When I was a little fellow, and Adam was a strapping lad of fifteen, and taught me carpentering, I used to think if ever I was *a rich sultan*, I would make Adam my *grand-vizier*. And I believe now, he would bear the exaltation as well as any poor wise man in an eastern story (*AB*. p. 62, my italics).

In addition to the narrator's likening him to a young emperor, Arthur imagines himself as a rich sultan, with its implications of despotic power. He borrows the image of the loyal grand-vizier from eastern stories and applies it to the life of the English rural world. The image of the sultan has been unconsciously absorbed as an illustration of absolute power, and Arthur's use of it suggests his ignorance of the real nature of his position in English society, and that ignorance is one symptom of the weakness that is to undo him. Far from being a mark of his broad-mindedness, the allusion to the sultan and the grand-vizier reveals the narrowness of his outlook which excludes any

understanding of another culture and another class. With his restricted imagination and egoism, Arthur belongs in a line of upper-class domineering figures, which includes Captain Wybrow, Godfrey Cass, Harold Transome and Henleigh Grandcourt in other novels.

Hetty, who is the major victim of Arthur's image as an upper-class Englishman, lives in her dream world, attracted precisely by his status. Their relationship is clearly defined at first through their different worlds: 'The poor child no more conceived at present the idea that the young squire could ever be her lover, than a baker's pretty daughter in the crowd, whom a young emperor distinguishes by an imperial but admiring smile, conceives that she shall be made empress' (*AB.* p. 100). The early warnings of the narrator that their worlds are totally separate hint at the tragedy to come. The essence of Arthur's attraction is that he lives in the world to which she would like to belong. Arthur is likened to a young emperor and the simile reminds us indirectly of Britain's imperial power while underlying Hetty's position as a powerless subject. There is a similar emphasis on class difference in their first meeting: '[w]hile Arthur gazed into Hetty's dark beseeching eyes, it made no difference to him what sort of *English she spoke*; and even if hoops and power had been in fashion, he would very likely not have been sensible just then that Hetty wanted those *signs of high breeding [...]*' (*AB.* p. 132, my italics). The class distinction between them is defined by their language and Arthur takes no account of the way Hetty speaks, since he is not serious about her. He looks at Hetty as a lovely young creature to admire and toy with, as a young emperor looks at his subjects. This lack of communication between different classes – or rather the upper class's lack of interest in the lower class – is the major cause of Hetty's tragedy, because Arthur's class dominates the world in which Hetty is only a passive receiver, while her image of his class is defective and deceptive.

Language was suggested as a key point in the definition of social and cultural identities in 'Mr Gilfil's Love Story' in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and the same idea recurs in this novel to differentiate Hetty's social world from that of Arthur. In the former story, Caterina's foreignness is attributed to her national identity, and language functions to differentiate her from English people. To some extent, Caterina's foreignness is lessened in terms of language, since her command of English is approved by the local inhabitants who consider that she speaks English like 'you an'me'. Hetty's social otherness in a world where the dominant norms are those of Arthur's class cannot be easily overcome. The English she speaks marks her off as belonging to a different world from his.

'From the Familiar to the Strange'

Hetty is associated with the mirror from the moment she first appears, both indicating her vain self-reflection, and reminding the reader of the author's intention to draw a realistic picture of her character: 'Hetty Sorrel often took the opportunity, when her aunt's back was turned, of looking at the pleasing reflection of herself in those polished surfaces, for the oak-table was usually turned up like a screen, and was more for ornament than for use [...]' (*AB*. p. 73). As Hetty is observed in her chamber looking at the mirror and thinking of Arthur, the narrator observes that 'there are some plants that have hardly *any roots*: you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her and never cared to be reminded of it again' (*AB*. p. 154, my italics). Hetty is rootless, ignorant and has a fundamental lack of sympathy for her environment. Her problem is that she has no real relationship with the

community which she was born into and lives in. Metaphorically, she is an outsider to Hayslope where she has grown up without apparently putting down roots. Her rootlessness is a part of her narrow perspective. In chapter 9, which is entitled 'Hetty's World,' her dreams of luxury and romance are depicted. These dreams are not realistic in the context of Hayslope and its hierarchical class system, although Eliot makes Hetty a real character, who harbours an ambition to step up in the world and become a 'lady'. In this sense, Hetty serves to show the vanity and shallowness of narrow and selfish expectations. With her sense of her own beauty, and dissatisfaction with her roots she is the first example of the rootless young women to be examined later in the figures of Rosamond Vincy and Gwendolen Harleth.

Eliot couples and contrasts narrow and selfish Hetty, metaphorically an outsider, with saint-like and selfless Dinah, who is an outsider in the Hayslope community in a literal sense.¹¹ Dinah, unlike Hetty, has 'grown deep' into her native county Stonyshire. What keeps her attached to Stonyshire are the needs of the people and their suffering, and she tolerates and sympathizes with the members of her community. She is one of them and yet she is different and superior in her power to teach them. When she comes to Hayslope, the inhabitants of the village also regard Dinah as different. Arthur Donnithorne, for example, has seen Dinah only once and notices that Dinah 'looked like St Catherine in a Quaker dress. It's a type of face one rarely sees among our common people' (*AB*. p. 63). Lisbeth Bede also observes that Dinah is different and tells her 'Ye're not like the lasses o'this country-side. I reckon folks is different at Snowfield from what they are here' (*AB*. p. 112). For most of the novel Dinah is presented as someone whose 'work was to minister t' others, and make no home for herself i' this

¹¹ Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot*, briefly indicates the importance of local roots, p. 40.

world' (*AB*. p. 522). Unlike Hetty, she has sympathy for others whoever they are; she is not materialistic and not ashamed of her background. She will never be a rootless outsider wherever she travels, as her world is wider, and she feels at home everywhere. As Michael Wolff observes Dinah 'moves to the center of the village from outside [...] from a wandering exile in Stonyshire',¹² whereas Hetty embarks on a metaphorical and literal journey from the familiar to the strange, from home to the unknown, from hope to despair. That journey really begins in chapter 35, which starts with Adam's busy day and continues with Hetty's trip to Treddleston to buy things for her wedding. At this point, she is placed in a wider perspective by the narrator's recollections of foreign travel and the reflection is pertinent to Hetty's unhappiness at a time when she ought to be at her happiest:

What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire – [...] I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony – the agony of the Cross (*AB*. p. 363).

This scene prepares the reader for Hetty's coming agony and with the contrasting images of blossoming nature and suffering, Hetty's unhappiness is in a sense universalized. Hers is the suffering of humanity no matter whether individuals are guilty or innocent, and the meditation serves to invite sympathy for the sufferings of others.

Hetty's journey to Windsor is depicted in full as a prelude to her tragedy. The narrator comments: 'There was not much room for her thoughts to *travel in the narrow circle of her imagination*, and she soon fixed on the one thing she would do to get away from her old life' (*AB*. p. 335, my italics). Even though the narrator points out the limitations of

¹² Michael Wolff, 'Adam Bede's Families: At Home in Hayslope and Nuneaton,' *GE-GHLS*, 32-33 (1997), 58-69, (p. 67).

her imagination and the fact that her thoughts do not travel very far, Hetty is travelling both metaphorically and literally towards the climax of her life and of the novel. 'The Journey in Hope' is described masterfully and is one of the most powerful passages in the whole novel. In terms of physical landscape, it is indeed a journey from the familiar to the strange; however, in terms of Hetty's internal landscape it is a journey which awakens and strengthens a positive notion of home.

A long, lonely journey, with sadness in the heart; away *from the familiar to the strange*: that is a hard and dreary thing even to the rich, the strong, the instructed: a hard thing, even when we are called by duty, not urged by dread.

What was it then to Hetty? With *her poor narrow thoughts*, no longer melting into vague hopes, but pressed upon by the chill of definite fear; repeating again and again the same small round of memories – shaping again and again the same childish, doubtful images of what was to come – seeing nothing in this *wide world* but the little history of her own pleasures and pains [...] (*AB*. p. 369, my italics).

Eliot gives a realistic account of the people Hetty comes across, the villages she passes through and the coaches she travels in, the stations, inns and other modes of transport. All these details are foreign to Hetty, since she has never been anywhere but Hayslope. Pretty Hetty, who enjoyed being looked at, feels the unbearable questioning gaze of strangers wherever she goes. She becomes less tightly self-centred as she loses her reliance on her beauty and starts to recognise other values in the world. Hunger, the pains of late pregnancy and hopelessness make her notice and respond to the objects around her. To some extent, wandering and suffering have awakened her to the reality of the world around her. During each stage of Hetty's travel, details of her small world are juxtaposed to new examples of the larger world she is travelling into. Her uncomfortable journey starts with narrow and familiar feelings and expectations, and continues towards other aspects of the world and to strange feelings. The reader feels every stage of her journey, which starts in 'false' hope and ends in 'despair'. Hetty, who dislikes her village, obviously has no idea that this journey will be difficult, and is

ignorant about the other parts of her country; 'O what a large world it was, and what hard work for her to find her way in it!' (*AB*. p. 374). A growing consciousness of home gradually develops in Hetty's mind as she looks at 'the prospect of further wandering among strangers. With the new clearness shed on it by the experience of her journey to Windsor. But which way could she turn'? (*AB*. p. 378). Encountering the real world Hetty shrinks from the idea of returning home. Hetty is not only a female wanderer described among strangers, but also a sufferer in her agony. In her case, the encounter of narrow-mindedness with a wider world that does not accommodate itself to her desires culminates in suicidal despair. Hetty is too frail a nature caught up in too difficult a situation to drive any benefit from her experience of the new and the strange. This is one occasion in Eliot's fiction when the encounter with the foreign (in the sense of that which lies beyond the narrow confines of the provincial home) fails to have any formative effect.

Conclusion

The ending of *Adam Bede* is one of the most difficult to interpret. Hetty's ending does not satisfy many readers since she is not given a chance to learn from her experience.¹³

¹³ For different interpretations of Hetty's ending see William Myers, Dorothea Barrett and also Gillian Beer, *George Eliot*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), p. 70; Alan D. Perlis, *A Return to the Primal Self: Identity in the Fiction of George Eliot* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 193. The ending is found static by many critics, such as S. Shuttleworth and M. J. Corbett. Corbett argues that '[i]n punishing only Hetty for committing a crime, in which the whole community participates, either directly or indirectly, Eliot levels her social critique unfairly at an individual', p. 296. Michael Squires has pointed out that Adam and Dinah are strong characters and Hetty and Arthur are set against them as morally weak characters. In chapter three, devoted to *Adam Bede*, Squires argues that 'a modified version of traditional pastoral' this novel deals sympathetically and nostalgically with life in the country, (p. 56). *The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975) pp. 53-85. Dianne F. Sadoff says that 'the dual setting of the narrative scene creates a spatial representation of likeness and difference' to undercut the oppositions between Dinah and Hetty; 'Nature's Language', p. 421. One of the early critics, U. C. Knoepfelmacher considers the ending a structural accommodation of transcendence and realism, and it is 'synthesized by the union of Adam and Dinah', *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 106-7.

As many critics have already argued, it can also be said that the novel does reinforce notions of stability and the renewal of the community at the end.¹⁴ Hetty is sent away to avoid more harm being done to the local world, because she rebels against her social status and creates anxiety in the community (a similar suggestion will be made by the local community in relation to Maggie at the end of *The Mill on the Floss*). Joyce Quiring Erickson points out that 'Hetty is rarely permitted to speak for herself', that she is 'like an animal', an 'object' even for the men who love her. Hetty is made other, not-human'.¹⁵ Hetty is indeed, probably the most harshly punished heroine in Eliot's fiction and is made to pay a high price for the narrow self-absorption she displays at the beginning. For example, while the novel punishes Hetty and exiles her from the local world, it brings Arthur back to Hayslope so that he can be 'set right in his own country air' (*AB*. p. 538). It can be thought that by her treatment Eliot herself excludes Hetty both from the novel and from the social life in Hayslope. In my argument Hetty's tragedy is partly due to her narrowness and lack of sympathy, but partly determined by her community. Hetty's blindness to and misidentification with her environment plays a significant role in her tragedy, but Eliot also makes her familial and rural ties play a decisive part. On the surface it is only Hetty as an individual who is punished and exiled from the community which she never cared for when she was living there, but at a deeper level that community, which excluded variety and ostracized difference, is implicated in her guilt.

¹⁴ Some critics are not happy about Dinah's ending either, claiming that Eliot gave her heroines low-key endings, while throwing the moral weight of the book behind them. J. McDonagh says that 'Eliot seems to approve of the littleness of Dinah's destiny, just as she had delighted in all those paintings of Dutch matrons', p. 24. In my reading, this novel suggests a more complex vision by renewing the integrity of the community at the end, and this is in the line with the realism of Dutch paintings in that it shows a 'real knowledge of the People, with a thorough study of their habits, their ideas, their motives' (*Essays*, p. 112).

¹⁵ Joyce Quiring Erickson, "Multiculturalism and the Question of Audience: *Adam Bede* as a Test Case" *Victorian Newsletter* 85 (1994), 20-25, (p. 24).

For example, particularly the older generation in the rural community takes a sceptical attitude towards anything foreign. Elisabeth Bede, dramatically voices her anxiety about strange places and strangers when she tells Adam 'donna thee talk o'goin' south'ard or narth'ard, an' leavin' thy feyther an' mother i' the church-yard, an' goin' to a country as they know nothin' on. I'll ne'er rest i' my grave if I donna see thee i' th' churchyard of a Sunday' (*AB*. p. 120). She cannot bear the idea of her son being in strange places and leaving her alone even when she is in her grave. Old Martin Poyser has similar views and utters his anxiety about encountering 'strangers'. When the Poysers decide to leave Hayslope forever after Hetty's scandal, he takes it as a part of the shame that Hetty has brought on the family. 'It's o'no use now [...] I mun be ta'en to the grave by strangers' (*AB*. p. 414). The old generation of rural people prefers to stick together and refuses any encounter with the wider world.

On the other hand, the limited world of Hayslope can also produce positive development. Interactions between opposite parties and encounters with different people serve to awaken social sympathy and tolerance, and thus a process of gradual development begins. Adam, who has been an example of a strong mind and body, closely connected to the natural world and to his community, is rewarded and is made a leader of that community. His painful love for Hetty has given him a glimpse of a larger world. He may continue to look back on his unhappy love, and the sad fate of Hetty herself, with pain, but that pain can be seen as a price worth paying: 'But it is not ignoble to feel that the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain'. A 'fuller life' is what he has achieved and, as the narrator insists, 'we can no more wish to return to a narrow sympathy, than a painter or musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his complete formula' (*AB*, p. 530). Adam becomes an 'enlarged being' as a result of his painful love. His love for

Dinah, as the narrator says in the same episode, is 'better and more precious to him' since it is 'the outgrowth of that fuller life'. Adam's development towards a broader sympathy and understanding – a development cemented by his marriage to Dinah – is thus a mark of all civilized progress and it augurs well for the community of Hayslope.

English rural life is largely static in Eliot's first full novel, yet significant elements of diversity are introduced within the framework of Englishness. In this sense *Adam Bede*, is significant in my exploration of different levels of Englishness in Eliot's early fiction. The novel has rebels like Hetty, as well as idealists like Adam and Dinah, or egoists like Arthur. Adam and Dinah are both united and prosper at the end, nevertheless this happy outcome does not simply confirm the stability of the community. Eliot shows a community that is changed and awakened gradually in line with the views she sets out in her essay 'Natural History of German Life'. Hetty's failing is her desire to circumvent gradual development by making a quick step upwards in the social world, and this is the mark of an individual without roots and thus without the capacity for organic growth. Eliot examines the complicated relationship between growth and stability in the closely-knit community of Hayslope but without coming to a comprehensive resolution: the narrow perspectives represented by Arthur and Hetty are not overcome, but a fuller life is achieved by Adam and Dinah, who become the new leaders of the community.

CHAPTER THREE

Dodsonness in *The Mill on the Floss*: Ancestral Culture**Introduction**

English life in *The Mill on the Floss* is introduced in the first sentence by the Floss as a broadening river in a wide plain. The river is a metaphor for latent breadth and continuity, and implies the existence of the other parts of the world beyond the stated geographical space.

A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace. [...T]he distant ships seem to be lifting their masts and stretching their red-brown sails close among the branches of the spreading ash. [...The Floss] seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low placid voice, as to the voice of one who is *deaf* and loving.¹

The introduction of the rural world here involves reference to distant parts, as the river Floss that represents the idyllic rural world is connected to the sea. The ships that ply on it indicate the commercial dimension of the river as well as suggesting geographical distance. The merging of the Floss with the sea creates a double destination: on the one hand the 'impetuous embrace' suggests passionate, untamed emotions, and on the other, the estuary is the gateway to the wider world.² At the same time, the Floss on its own

¹ The text used is *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 7. Hereafter in parenthesis, (my italics).

² The critical argument on *The Mill on the Floss* has already offered various readings centred on the role of the river. Its structural, thematic, historical and social effects in the novel's success or failure have also been repeatedly discussed by Eliot's critics. Jules Law, in his recent study offers a different view suggesting a relationship between the river's material and social roles in terms of gender and power. Law reads the opening scene by playing with the word 'checking' and highlights the power struggle between Maggie and Tom: 'Maggie is identified with the river Floss, and Tom with the "checking" or constraining tide', (p. 56). Jules Law, 'Water Rights and the "Crossing o'Breeds": Chiastic Exchange in *The Mill on the Floss*', in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender*, ed. by Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 52-69.

runs quietly, and has a peaceful and tender voice to suit the silence of the deaf, and that notion of deafness recurs in the following pages, implying both harmony and restriction.

On the next page, for example, the river Ribble meets the mill and deafness is repeated with a slightly different meaning.

The rush of the water, and the booming of the mill, bring *a dreamy deafness*, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They are like a great curtain of sound, *shutting one out from the world beyond* (MF. p. 8, my italics).

The untamed river rushes randomly to meet either the sea or the mill. When it reaches the mill, their union creates a shelter, keeping the outer world away. The river, in a sense, is tamed by the mill, as nature is by industry, and the result is a confining one. The river and the mill together create a peaceful atmosphere, but at the same time their union rather restricts and deafens, cutting the inhabitants off from the world beyond. The Floss recalls the connection of the local world to distant parts, while deafness suggests a curtain of sound, which acts as a barrier to the world beyond. Deafness not only sets that world at a distance, but also deepens the contradictions within the peaceful, idyllic scene of St Ogg's. The deafness created by the rush of the water and the booming of the mill will, in a figurative sense, afflict both Mr Tulliver and Tom, and in a sense, it accentuates the oppressive narrowness of St Ogg's. Moreover, this union of river and mill prefigures Maggie's fatal connection to both the mill and the Floss, which determines the novel's ending, where Maggie dies beneath the waves of the Floss in flood, united with Tom after rescuing him from the mill.³

³ For a detailed discussion on this episode see Elizabeth Weed, *The Mill on the Floss or the Liquidation of Maggie Tulliver*, *Genre*, XI (1978), 427-444. Weed relates the thematic enlargement to Feuerbach's ethics, which are highly valued by Eliot. Weed's article also provides an impressive account of possible readings of the ending of the novel. She does indeed look at the ending in terms of Maggie's embracing Tom in the waves of the Floss, of the circularity of the plot, and of thematic relation to the river, and proposes that the most satisfactory reading is to see the ending not as a 'neat, closed synthesis' but rather a permanent dialectic [for] some small hope in the possibility of the ethical advancement of society', (p. 436).

The opening passage starts with the Floss, then adds a waggoner and a little girl to the scene by the mill. The deafness of the scene is interrupted by the wagon, which plays a part in the description of the rural world that anticipates *Felix Holt*, where Eliot will introduce different modes of travelling before opening the door to life in Transome Court. The thunder of the waggon indicates that a true peacefulness, which deafens and shuts one out from the world beyond, is not possible anymore. It suggests the possibility of outside intrusion into the life of the mill and the arrival of news from elsewhere. As the waggon disappears, the little girl, who has been watching the same scene with the narrator, goes home and the idyllic but deafening scene is transformed into an ordinary scene of family life in the second chapter, where Mr Tulliver is talking to his wife about his decision on how to educate their son, Tom.

The idea of deafness introduced in the opening scene, is a metaphor that will recur crucially to indicate the elements of 'monomania' fostered by the culture of St Ogg's, as Philip sees it (*MF*. p. 335). For example, as I shall discuss at a later stage, Aunt Glegg always speaks to Tom and Maggie in a loud emphatic way 'as if she considered them deaf or perhaps rather idiotic' (*MF*. p. 62). The imperious attitude of aunt Glegg is implicitly criticized by the tone of the narrative voice: speaking in a loud voice as if to members of an inferior race, she seeks to control Maggie's and Tom's behaviour and to teach them their duty according to the values of the Dodsons. The idea of deafness recurs here, and it serves to emphasize how the judgemental stance of the dominant culture is narrow and intolerant to the 'other'. In another scene, it is Tom who is deaf and cold to Maggie after she knocks over the card-house he has managed to build with the skill she, unlike Lucy, can never match. It is significant that Maggie's reaction is caused more by Tom's patronizing power and intolerance for her weakness, than by any

jealousy of Lucy. The narrator indicates that Tom ‘condescended to admire [Lucy’s] houses as well as his own, the more readily because she had asked him to teach her’ (*MF*. p. 86). Tom is ready to accept the submission that Lucy readily grants; Maggie, on the other hand, has her own desires and her own ways of behaving which do not fit her for a submissive and subordinate role. Tom’s deafness to Maggie’s instant apology, rather like his overlooking of objects around him, emphasises his tendency to oppressive power.

The idea of deafness occurs again later in the novel, when from Book Fifth onwards, Maggie’s identity conflict is examined in relation to the illuminating effect of Philip and the books he provides for her. The ‘sameness of the days’ is replaced by ‘a mental conflict already begun’ after her first interview with Philip (*MF*. p. 280, p. 325). This process starts a new phase and reawakens her childhood enthusiasm and eagerness to learn, and dissatisfaction with home becomes inevitable. The conflict in Maggie comes to be one between home and the world. As she says, ‘it has made me restless: it has made me think a great deal about the world; and I have impatient thoughts again – I get weary of my home [...]’. Philip’s explanations and reply to Maggie’s restlessness relate the idea of deafness to her condition, and, by implication, to the culture which causes it: ‘[w]hat you call self-conquest – blinding and *deafening* yourself to all but one train of impressions – is only the culture of monomania in a nature like yours’ (*MF*. p. 335, my italics). The oppressive narrowness of St Ogg’s lies behind her ‘culture of monomania’, and highlights the need for a kind of cultural relativism. With his criticism of monomania Philip acts as the spokesman for tolerance and cultural relativism, while his physical handicap defines him as ‘other’ in relation to the normalities of St Ogg’s.⁴

⁴ Normality here is taken in Foucault’s terms.

Ironically however, Philip criticises Maggie for disabling herself metaphorically. Eliot places Maggie's subjection in a culture which excludes individuality, and thus emphasises how sorrowful the possible escape from it becomes.

Philip, in a similar way to Ladislaw's secret teaching of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, provides Maggie with access to knowledge. He is both a devoted teacher and, at the same time, a dilettante, who is 'cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and effective faculty in none [...] caring for painting and music' and for literature. In his own words he 'flutter[s] all ways, and fl[ies] in none' (*MF*, p. 327). Although unable to find a satisfactory role for himself, he counters Maggie's spiritual and emotional confinement and opens up wider horizons, arguing powerfully that her wilful renunciation of desire is a form of 'narrow asceticism' and even 'a narrow self-delusive fanaticism' (*MF*, p. 327). His dilettantism is thus positive in enabling him to identify and combat its polar opposite, fanaticism – a fanaticism which in Maggie's case threatens to assimilate her to an oppressive culture.

The Controlling Gaze in St Ogg's

The community of St Ogg's is closely-knit; nevertheless, the diversity within it is more fully represented than in the earlier fiction. There are the Dodsons, the Tullivers, the Guests, and the Wakems, each of which represents a different social dimension. The Tullivers who have run the mill for three generations, the Guests and the Gleggs with their commercial ties abroad, and the Wakems who represent the inefficient face of the law, all live in the same milieu. The Dodsons, even though there is no one to continue the family name, represent the dominant sub-culture in St Ogg's. They have a strict code of behaviour, which invokes a strong sense of pride in their family roots, and their

physical and moral inheritance. Their feeling of superiority excludes the 'strange' ways of people other than members of the Dodson family:

There were particular ways of doing everything in that family: particular ways of bleaching the linen, of making the cowslip wine, curing the hams, and keeping the bottled gooseberries; so that no daughter of that house could be indifferent to the privilege of having been born a Dodson. [...] the only bitter circumstance attending this superiority was a painful inability to approve the condiments or the conduct of families ungoverned by the Dodson tradition. A female Dodson, when in 'strange houses,' always ate dry bread with her tea and declined any sort of preserves, having no confidence in the butter [...] There were some Dodsons less like the family than others – that was admitted; but in so far they were "kin," they were of necessity better than those who were "no kin." And it is remarkable that while no individual Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson, each was satisfied, not only with him or herself, but with the Dodsons collectively (*MF*. pp. 43-44).

Ancestral ways of doing things are based on the idea of likeness – having the same physical appearance and believing in the same principles. Even if there are differences among them, inferior Dodsons are still accepted as kin as long as they satisfy the collective Dodson identity. The boundary between being a Dodson and not is strictly drawn by them, and is criticised by Eliot throughout the novel. Dodsons are brought up to discriminate against others and this takes on a larger dimension in that the Dodson ideology can be seen as a form of Englishness, and a way of imposing one's culture on an inferior one.

The Tullivers and the Dodsons stand in direct contrast to each other physically and culturally. The encounter of the two families – the dominant and the inferior – exemplifies difference and otherness. The Dodson sisters agree that 'the Tulliver blood did not mix well with the Dodson blood' (*MF*. p. 60). Blood here connotes cultural differences as well as racial ones. The union of the two families does not make for tolerance and harmony but, rather, intensifies differences. The Dodson criticism of the

Tullivers is mainly based on the children. In Foucauldian terms, the Dodson aunts use the normalizing effect of community on Bessy's children, as she herself is too a weak mother to do it on her own. Maggie invites the Dodsons' criticism more than Tom does. Tom is regarded as physically more like a Dodson, although his actions and temper are of Tulliver origin, while Maggie has always been considered a 'strange' child on account of her different personality as well as her physical appearance. Mrs Glegg discriminates against Maggie, maintaining that '[...] that child'll come to no good: there isn't a bit of our family in her' (*MF*. p. 215). Indeed Maggie resembles her aunt Moss who provides a strong contrast to the Dodson sisters both physically and socially, a 'tall, worn, dark-haired woman', as different from a Dodson as possible. Aunt Pullet, having the same motives in mind, stresses Maggie's otherness, pitying

poor Bessy's bad-luck with her children, and expressed a half-formed project of paying for Maggie's being sent to a distant boarding-school, which would not prevent her being so brown, but might tend to subdue some vices in her [...] (*MF*. p. 128).

In aunt Pullet's project, distant parts are brought into consideration as places to train and tame rebellious minds. A similar idea is uttered by public opinion towards the end of the novel when Maggie returns alone from her elopement with Stephen: the prevailing view is that she must go away from St Ogg's for a time. Distant parts are viewed suspiciously by provincial people, and are held to be only suitable for those who need to be punished or at least tamed.⁵

As Maggie grows up the potential social dangers attributed to her physical brownness are diminished; and she gradually becomes submissive and integrated into St Ogg's after her father's death. As representatives of the patriarchal ideology, Mrs Tulliver and

⁵ There is similar implication in Mrs Tulliver's embarrassment when she thinks that her china and linen are to be sold to strangers.

Lucy, spell out Maggie's integration into the community. Her mother even admires Maggie's brown arms, while Lucy emphasises their beauty. Nevertheless, everything is changed again when Stephen is irresistibly attracted by them. Maggie elopes with him; coming back with no wedding-ring on her finger to bring down a storm of disapproval on her head. The community once again defines her as a troublesome misfit and wishes to see her banished to somewhere where she is no longer a threat. 'It was to be hoped that she would go out of the neighbourhood – to America, or anywhere – so as to purify the air of St Ogg's from the taint of her presence, extremely dangerous to daughters there!' (MF. p. 492). Maggie's neutralised brownness is thus recalled after her return from her apparent elopement with Stephen Guest, and again she is the alien figure who must leave the neighbourhood in order to decontaminate it. Eliot does not, of course, send her into exile and avoids creating a similar end for her to Hetty's. Maggie continues to live in her community, and her innocence is finally recognized even by Tom, though at a moment when it is too late to save her.

Tom, the 'Dodson'

The union of the Dodsons and Tullivers has two diametrically opposed outcomes: Tom and Maggie, who experience their *Bildung* process into adulthood differently.⁶ Eliot contrasts Maggie and Tom from their childhood on, especially by emphasising the details of Tom's education but hinting that Maggie would have done better with that

⁶ *The Mill on the Floss* has been considered as a female *Bildungsroman* depicting the female character's development. Charlotte Goodman suggests that this novel studies a twin *Bildung*: 'the shared childhood, the adolescent separation, and the final reunion of a male and female protagonist' in a parallel way to George Eliot's own experience with her brother, and says that the ending of the novel suggests a 'pastoral world where male and female were undivided', p. 34. Susan Fraiman, however provides an alternative reading of the novel, arguing that Maggie's *Bildung* 'coexist[s] with oppositional effects, rather than being the 'progress of an alienated individual', emphasising that the essence of the novel as a genre is 'the individual in society'. 'The Mill on the Floss, the Critics and the *Bildungsroman*', *PMLA*, 108: 1 (1993), 136-149, (pp. 137-8).

opportunity. Tom is clearly more a Dodson than a Tulliver, he is narrow, intolerant, egoistical and not open to anything foreign to his own small circle of interest. He is introduced as one of the George Eliot's despotic characters. The narrator even refers to him as 'the young sultan', aligning him, ^Llike Arthur Donnithorne before him, with the image of an eastern 'despot' (MF. p. 100). He enjoys punishing people, particularly Maggie, as on the occasion when she forgets to feed his rabbits, and he does not allow Maggie to join them when he plays with Lucy. As a child he is always punishing and restricting Maggie and forbidding her to do things, and as a result, he becomes 'the human being of whom she had been most afraid, from her childhood upwards [...]' (MF. p. 483).

While Eliot's later characters who show despotic features, such as Harold Transome and Henleigh Grandcourt, have had experience of a wider world and Transome has actually been something of a sultan in the East, to the extent of purchasing a slave – Tom has never set foot beyond the little world of St Ogg's and his life is largely confined to the mill. The narrator emphasises the significance of these roots and early experience when Tom comes home at the end of his half-year at Mr Stelling's.

There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our personality: [...] is it not the striving after something better and better in our surroundings, the grand characteristic that distinguished man from the brute – or, to satisfy a scrupulous accuracy of definition, *that distinguishes the British man from the foreign brute?* (MF. p. 152, my italics).

This passage moves from a sympathetic meditation on the comforting familiarity of the world of home and childhood to an ironic exposure of the limited sensibility and chauvinist prejudices of someone who has never moved beyond that world. Individual experiences are extended to the national level, and Tom's narrowness of outlook is

associated with a complacent Britishness. His energetic efforts to better himself and his surroundings are inseparable from hostility to everything unknown and foreign.

Tom's intolerance of the new and his commitment to sameness and continuity remain unchanged throughout the novel. In his childhood he always insists that he is right: "'I'd do just the same again". That was his usual mode of viewing his past actions; whereas Maggie was always wishing she had done something different' (MF. p. 53). Tom's view is given in his own colourless words which conveys his lack of imagination as well as his firmness of purpose, while Maggie's are presented by the sympathetic voice of the narrator. Likewise, in the later chapters during the crucial occurrences relating to Philip, the same image of Tom's narrowness recurs. When he makes Maggie vow that she will not see Philip without his consent, she accuses Tom of not having a 'mind large enough to see that there is anything better than your own conduct and your own petty aims' (MF. p. 347). Towards the end of the novel, the narrator ironically remarks on Tom's obsession with not forgiving Maggie: 'Poor Tom! he judged by what he had been able to see [...]' (MF. p. 499). Even Aunt Glegg shows her sympathy towards her niece, justifying it according to the Dodson ideology that one must stand by one's own kin, Tom's Dodson narrowness combined with his masculine dominance prevents him from taking Maggie's side.

Tom, like every one of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over him, leaving a slight deposit of polish: if you are inclined to be severe on his severity, remember that *the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision* (MF. p. 500, my italics).

For the future both of individuals and of society, Eliot tries to extend tolerance at least among those with a wider vision so that they can teach the coming generation. Tom may be beyond help, but there are others with a 'wider vision' even in St Ogg's.

Maggie, the 'Other'

The novel is full of examples in which Maggie is classified as strange by people around her. She is first introduced to us as a 'small mistake of nature', and in the process of establishing her unusual identity she is repeatedly found to be different and odd, 'a mulatter', 'a Bedlam creature' (*MF*. p. 13). The first examples of Maggie's physical difference imply her distinctive personality. Her rebellious, quick and wishful personality is matched by her physical appearance. The famous passage where she cuts off her hair emphasises the ongoing family discussion about her untamed hair, brown skin and rebellious personality. When she comes down with her locks shorn, the Dodsons reprove her in a chorus.

'Fie, for shame!' said aunt Glegg, in her loudest, severest tone of reproof. 'Little girls as cut their own hair should be whipped and fed on bread-and-water – not come and sit down with their aunts and uncles.'

'Ay, ay,' said uncle Glegg, meaning to give a playful turn to this denunciation, 'she must be sent to gaol, I think, and they'll cut the rest of her hair off there, and make it all even.'

'She's more like a gypsy nor ever,' said aunt Pullet, in a pitying tone; 'it's very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown – the boy's fair enough. I doubt it'll stand in her way i' life to be so brown' (*MF*. p. 68).

The physical difference is disapproved of by the dominant ideology of the Dodsons, and similar comments recur frequently in the novel. Maggie's brownness is repeatedly likened to that of a gypsy in her childhood, and disparaged by the Dodsons. By contrast, her father, who stands apart from the Dodson ideology, defends her brownness on the grounds that '[t]here's red wheat as well as white' and adds that 'some like the dark grain best' (*MF*. p. 62). Mr Tulliver's words of defence also indicate that his – to Dodson eyes inferior – outlook tolerates differences, even though as a masculine member of the Victorian world he shows other forms of bigotry in his approach to women.

Maggie is a heroine who desires to extend her horizons in a society where the cultural norm is strongly opposed to differences. She is not allowed to fulfil her intellectual desires in a novel in which the Victorian middle-class view that women are created by nature as 'other' is criticised by Eliot, who herself experienced similar problems to those of Maggie.⁷ The power relations between men and women obliged women to remain subject to men within the patriarchal family, and in society at large.⁸ What was expected from women was 'personal appearance, accomplishments, submissiveness, and ignorance, which were described as innocence'.⁹ In other words, 'the other sex' in the patriarchal ideology had 'an-other' sphere. The man, the adventurer and combatant in the public sphere, was incapable of understanding the needs of the other sex, over which he held sway. In this view, even the educated woman had to remain within the home, where she would have the opportunity to exert a benign influence on husband and children and therefore indirectly on the outside world and on the future of humanity.¹⁰ At the same time, this ideology also put women in a place where their moral superiority and reproductive power were supposedly the bridge between the past and the future, and between the public and the private sphere, for the creation of new and healthy generations.¹¹ Women were expected to give birth, and to educate their children for the future of the nation and of the culture, although their opportunities as citizens and participants in social life were limited. This situation made the mother's

⁷ For further discussion on women as other in patriarchal society see Linda McDowell, Rosemary Pringle, eds., *Defining Women: Social Institutions and Gender Divisions* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); and for Victorian domestic and class ideology see Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle-Class*.

⁸ For theorising patriarchy, female subordination, and socio-biology see Nickie Charles, *Gender Divisions and Social Change* (GB: Harvester Wheatsheaf; US: Barnes and Noble, 1993).

⁹ For the Victorian ideology of domestic sphere and women's role see Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House, Together with the Victories of Love*, int. by Alice Meynell (London: Routledge, [1905]).

¹⁰ A. Hunt, *Woman's Portion: Ideology, Culture and the British Female Novel Tradition* (New York, London: Garland Publishing, 1988) pp. 5-6. On this subject see also Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and Carla L. Peterson, *The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel from Napoleon to Victoria* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

relationship to the daughter one that was pledged to continuity and sameness, while mother-son, and daughter-father relationships involved a strong sense of 'otherness'.¹²

The construction of female identity within the family is a fundamentally paradoxical matter in the patriarchal world, and Maggie's otherness in the masculine world of St Ogg's, is dramatised in the novel by amplifying her entrapment. Maggie's connection to her maternal and paternal roots is a particular issue. Her identity has developed differently from previous generations of women and with her broader outlook she cannot identify with her mother. To be absorbed into the St. Ogg's community would be for her a form of disintegration. Her ancestral roots set her apart as the other for different reasons and reinforce her entrapment. Her father negatively acknowledges her intellectual distinction in terms of gender difference, and her mother's family reproaches her as a potential danger on account of her physical difference. Mr Tulliver, who tolerates Maggie's physical appearance, does not encourage her intellectual development; and her mother, who is too narrow to declare any opinion about her intellectual needs, is strongly dissatisfied with Maggie's physical difference. Her otherness is located in her physical difference and in the potential effects of her

¹¹ J. Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working Class Women in Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), (p. 49). On this subject, see also Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

¹² For a further discussion on mother-daughter relationship in this novel see Diana Postlethwaite, 'Of Maggie, Mothers, Monsters, and Madonnas: Diving Deep in *The Mill on the Floss*', *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 20 (1992), 303-19. See also Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Life's Empty Pack: Notes toward a Literary Daughteronomy', *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1984-85), 355-380. Gilbert's article focuses on culture-nature conflict to explain origins and boundaries of society basically in *Silas Marner*. Yet, both Postlethwaite and Gilbert argue the daughter's separation from, and dissatisfaction with, the mother's world. From my point of view the sameness with the mother's world recalls the imposed predicament for the daughter in Eliot's novels, and the heroine is either created as literally motherless, or metaphorically disidentifies with the mother so that her development towards the larger world can be free of the mother's restrictions. As I have also argued in my MA dissertation on 'Mother-Daughter Relationship in Eliot's Three Novels: *The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*', Eliot's representation of this issue focuses on the contradictions between the mother and daughter, the daughter desires to disidentify with the mother, in order to achieve a possible productive encounter with the public world, from which her mother has been banned. Another crucial dilemma was that, 'women have neither power nor wealth to

appearance. In this sense, both Mrs Tulliver and her Dodson sisters represent the dominant narrow perspectives, and Eliot insistently shows the insufficiency of this approach by sympathising with Maggie's need for a larger world, which she is only able to find in books.

Maggie's otherness involves a conflict with the blonde character at different points in the novel, emphasising her 'cultural hybridity' as Gill Frith puts it, and her imaginative reaction to Madame de Staël's novel *Corinne* (1807).¹³ In Maggie's critical response to *Corinne*, there is a clear criticism of those novels of the nineteenth century in which the female sex is regarded as soft and pure and in which appearance is accepted as a sufficient means of distinguishing people.

I didn't finish the book,' said Maggie. 'As soon as I came to the blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up, and determined to read no further. [...] I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. [...] If you could give me some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance (*MF*. p. 332).

She calls for 'objective' classification and dislikes books whose evaluations are subjective. Maggie's protest against the 'blond-haired heroine' even in the books she reads can thus be interpreted as her rebellion against the historical perception of the female sex. Maggie wants to be respected for her intellect instead of being admired for her physical appearance.

hand their daughter', (p. 91). Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1979).

¹³ Gill Frith's reading provides a detailed discussion of both novels from a cultural point of view. 'Playing with Shawls: George Eliot's Use of *Corinne* in *The Mill on the Floss*' in *George Eliot and Europe* ed. by John Rignall (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 225-240, (p. 225). My main concern therefore is not devoted to a comparison of those novels, I rather aim to emphasise Maggie's complicated otherness in St Ogg's and her conflictual encounter with 'imagined' gypsies.

A variation on the traditional dichotomy of black and white is strongly evident in the novel, and shows 'the idealised, socially productive elements of the female sex embodied in the blonde heroine, while the more disturbing elements of womanhood go to the dark one'.¹⁴ Maggie's cousin Lucy is blond-haired and her locks are associated with her soft and innocent personality. She embodies conventional femininity, has no spark of rebellion and is looked on with favour by the Dodsons. Such conventionality has its limitations and, on occasions, Lucy's 'innocence' is shown rather to be silliness. In her childhood, she is helpless when Maggie pushes her into the mud, for she cannot protect or defend herself. Later in her relationship with Stephen, we realise that she is aware of her limitations:

Lucy: 'Yes, I know you think I am silly'.
 Stephen: 'I think you are perfectly charming'
 Lucy: 'And my silliness is part of my charming?'
 Stephen: 'I didn't say that' [...] (*MF*. p. 364).

George Eliot is clearly critical of passive women, however much they may be idealized by social norms, but on the other hand she is well-aware that female independence is not valued and accepted by society.

Problematic Integration: Maggie and the Gypsies

Apart from the obvious reasons for Maggie's identification with the dark woman, there is a plea here for a more discerning discrimination than that offered by such blunt dichotomies as black and white, blonde and dark. Maggie's readiness to take a wider view leads her to learn about 'other' parts of the world and different people. When Maggie is a child, the mill both seems to her 'a little world apart' and engages her in her pursuit of independence. When Mr Tulliver loses the mill, Maggie loses her contact

¹⁴ José Angel García Landa, 'The Chains of Semiosis: Semiotics, Marxism and Female Stereotypes in *The*

with the world. In the passage below, the narrator enters Maggie's mind to show her overall agony.

She thought it was part of the hardship of her life that there was laid upon her the *burthen of larger wants* than others seemed to feel – that she had to endure this wide hopeless yearning for that something, whatever it was, that was greatest and best on this earth. She wished she could have been like Bob, with his easily satisfied ignorance, or like Tom, who had something to do on which he could fix his mind with a steady purpose, and disregard everything else. Poor child! [...] she was as lonely in her trouble as if she had been the only girl in the civilised world of that day who had come out of her school-life with a soul untrained for inevitable struggles – with no other part of her inherited share in the hard-won treasures of thought, which generations of painful toil have laid up for the race of men [...] (MF. p. 288).

Maggie is alone in her painful quest to learn about the other, and there are some significant references here to her attempts to enter the larger world. In one of the early chapters, we see her lending a book to Luke on 'Pug's Tour of Europe'. Maggie tries to explain to him importance of the foreign, offering to lend him her books, and saying of the easiest one, Pug's Tour of Europe:

"[...] that would tell you all about the different sorts of people in the world, and if you didn't understand the reading, the pictures would help you – they show the looks and ways of people, and what they do. There are the Dutchmen, very fat, and smoking, you know – and one sitting on a barrel."

"Nay, Miss, I'n no opinion o'Dutchmen. There ben't much good i'knowin' about *them*"

"But they're our fellow-creatures, Luke – we ought to know about our fellow-creatures."

"Not much o'fellow-creatures, I think Miss; all I know – my old master, as war a knowin' man, used to say, says he, 'If e'er I sow my wheat wi'out brinin', I'm a Dutchman,' says he; an' that war as much as to say as a Dutchmen war a fool, or next door. Nay Nay, I aren't goin'to bother mysen about Dutchmen. There's fools enoo – an' rogues enoo – wi'out lookin' i' books for 'em" (MF. p. 30, emphasis in original).

Luke does not know or care about Dutchmen, maintaining 'there ben't much good I' knowin' about them'; and his words define both the typical outlook of an ordinary

working class man toward foreigners, and also the cultural grounds of this outlook. The borders between England and other parts of the world are also used in this dialogue to expand the borders of the self. The geographical distance involved is not great, yet Luke's ignorance and more importantly his lack of interest in Dutchmen are emphatic. Luke is closed in on himself, aware of only his narrow environment, and in this respect he is typical of the peasant world that Eliot reflects on in 'The Natural History of German Life': 'among peasantry it is the race, the district, the province, that has its style' (*Essays*, p. 114). Moreover, Luke's opinions of Dutchmen are influenced by his old master, showing how cultural prejudices are transferred between generations.

The limitations of English rural life are thus brought out by Maggie's exaggerated imagination and her fantasies about other parts of the world. She makes a second effort and offers Luke another book on 'Animated Nature'.

[...P]erhaps you would like 'Animated Nature' better – that's not Dutchmen, you know, but elephants, and kangaroos, and the civet cat, and the sun-fish, and a bird sitting on its tail – I forget its name. There are countries full of those creatures, instead of horses and cows, you know. Shouldn't you like to know about them, Luke? (*MF*. p. 30)

Maggie's interest in other cultures is extended to animal life in a way which underlines the differences between home and abroad, England and other countries.¹⁵ She is dissatisfied with the knowledge she attains from her family, and her childish imagination is fired by an ambition to learn about the 'other'; in whatever form it may take. The foreign in Maggie's experience is represented as something exotic and unreachable in the conditions of St. Ogg's.

¹⁵ On 'Animated Nature' see Beryl Gray "'Animated Nature': *The Mill on the Floss*" in *George Eliot and Europe* ed. by John Rignall (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 138-155. Gray has focused on Maggie's experience of 'animated nature' in which she is not only distinguished from Tom, but also 'as a

Another example of Maggie's imaginative interest in foreign parts is when she expects heroic action from Tom: '[...] if we were in the lion countries – I mean in Africa, where it's very hot – lions eat people there. I can show it you in the book where I read it' (*MF*, p. 35). Maggie's references to the other parts of the world and her hunger to learn more about them are significantly followed by her fear and regret that she has forgotten to feed Tom's rabbits. Her restless desire to know more and to enlarge her world has no place in Tom's static world of steady purpose. He has settled ideas on almost everything which interests him, and cannot forgive any mistake in relation to his possessions, such as his rabbits. Maggie's curiosity on the other hand reveals how she is inclined to a form of cultural pluralism, which sets her apart from her family. Neither the other members of her family, nor the other local figures of St Ogg's –with the exception of Philip- can accompany her in her enthusiasm to communicate with the 'other', with those who differ from herself.

Eliot's aim of challenging this type of cultural narrowness among English people can be seen in Maggie's experiences with the foreign in this novel. The passage in which she runs away to the gypsies is therefore crucially important in order to understand the complicated issue of cultural relativism.¹⁶ The gypsies in the novel represent the cultural 'other' for their dark skins, different life style and language, and yet at the same time they live in the same landscape with the rural community. The 'other' – as a collective identity – with a different life style, culture, language and race is thus transplanted into the novel of English life. This episode is dealt with delicately by Eliot, and the narrator shows the contrast between two different worlds and their life styles to remind the

manifestation of her quick, inventive curiosity, [it] counterbalances the influences of the natural world' such as 'the dipping sounds, whisperings, rustlings' etc. 'for which she is so often criticized', (p. 139).

reader of the presence of other cultures, even marginalized ones. The other culture is also transplanted as a community into English life in Eliot's last novel where the Jews – as a wandering and suffering race – play a vital part in the action. Otherness is extended both spatially and thematically in *Daniel Deronda*, which not only explores Jewish culture but also ventures onto foreign soil.

In *The Mill on the Floss* the gypsies provide an experimental experience for Maggie, who runs away to them in instinctive search for both physical and mental harmony, away from the narrowness of home. She supposes that the gypsies will be flexible and more respectful of her knowledge, unlike Tom or the other members of her family who are always finding fault with her. On her way to the gypsies and soon after she meets them, Maggie remembers what Tom told her about the gypsies when she had once proposed that 'he should stain his face brown, and they should run away together; but Tom rejected the scheme with contempt, observing that gypsies were thieves, and hardly got anything to eat, and had nothing to drive but a donkey' (*MF*. p. 104). The gypsies are exotic strangers in the world of St. Ogg's, and Tom's self-centred mind is not open to them, dismissing them with conventional prejudices. The 'other' – either Maggie or the gypsies – is framed according to the dominant culture and has no chance of being accommodated by St Ogg's where cultural norms exclude those who are unlike themselves.

Maggie's encounter with the gypsies disturbs her imaginative vision of the other culture to which she has repeatedly been likened. That 'imagined community' in Maggie's case

¹⁶ Although I have a different line from her, in examining this passage I have been illuminated by Susan L. Meyer's 'Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*', *Victorian Studies*, 33: 2 (1990), 247-268.

is problematized, as it is not based on any real knowledge.¹⁷ After observing the life of the gypsies she soon recognises that their world is totally different both from the one she lives in St. Ogg's and from what she had imagined to be 'entirely in harmony with circumstances' (*MF*. p. 104). Physical sameness, in this sense, does not entail cultural similarity, and the gypsies are considered foreigners even by Maggie. The differences between St. Ogg's and the gypsies 'separate Maggie and the gypsies rather than connecting them. Maggie, who herself has been categorised as the 'other' by the Dodsons, eventually concludes that the gypsies are the 'other', since their culture is so very different from her own. The oppressed and marginalized Maggie finds no kinship with the marginalized community of the gypsies. Tom's harsh judgement on them is endorsed not only by Maggie's confused observation, but also by the narrator's presentation of them: they are dirty, they steal, and they are far from knowing such staple elements of St Ogg's life as bread and butter.

Maggie's encounter with the gypsies also explicates otherness on cultural and linguistic levels. Her knowledge of the 'other' is superficial and limited – and Eliot does not blame Maggie for her ignorance, as she is only a child – and a child who struggles to escape the oppressive narrowness of her surroundings. Yet, however much she may be a rebel, Maggie is inevitably a representative of the culture in which she has been raised. The narrator describes Maggie's cultural subjectivity, even before she reaches the borders of the gypsy domaine. She is accustomed to have 'bread and butter' with her tea at the particular time of day that she arrives there. Her imagination normalizes and in this sense universalizes her own habitual customs and expects the other to share them. Her enthusiasm to teach the gypsies about Columbus is significantly interrupted by her

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism* (New York, London: Verso, 1996).

hunger as she says: 'it's rather too long to tell before tea ... *I want my tea so*' (*MF*, p. 109, emphasis in original). The narrator is quick to recapitulate Maggie's 'patronizing instruction' and to stress the gulf between two cultures (*MF*, p. 109).

On another level, Maggie is amazed to discover that gypsies even speak their own language, which she cannot understand. She had tried to learn some Latin by looking at the back of the books, and she had even sometimes read dictionaries and found out the different meanings of words, but her imagination of the gypsies had never reached the point of thinking that they had their own language. The narrator's playful comment that 'it was a little confusing' for Maggie to hear gypsies speaking in another language, anticipates criticism of the narrow intellectual perspective of the English to be found in Eliot's later work. These will be investigated in my last chapter, however it is worth quoting here one of her letters to Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe written after the publication of *Daniel Deronda*, in which she acidly observes that 'I find men educated at Rugby supposing that Christ spoke Greek' (*Letters*, IV, p. 301-302).

The encounter with the gypsies can be illuminated by post-colonial theory, which holds that 'cultural definition in the novel maps the boundaries between self and other, grounded each in specifically constituted locations'.¹⁸ Edward Said argues that 'there is a convergence between the great geographical scope of the empires, especially the British one, and universalising cultural discourses. Power makes this convergence possible, of course; with it goes the ability to be in far-flung places, to learn about other people, to codify and disseminate knowledge, to characterise, transport, install, and

¹⁸ Perera, Suvendrini, *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1991), p. 3.

display instances of other cultures, and above all to rule them'.¹⁹ In this sense, Maggie can be considered as a member of the dominant culture when she regards the gypsies as her inferiors who 'would gladly receive her and pay much respect on account of her superior knowledge' (*MF*. p. 104). Although she 'thought gypsydom was her only refuge', she ends up, ironically, treating it as an inferior culture. In her patronising approach and superiority, Maggie wants to live with the gypsies but only as a Queen, not as an ordinary member of their community. She wishes to educate them, believing that her knowledge is essential to everyone, whether it concerns washing basins or more elevated subjects such as 'Geography and Columbus. The conflict between her seeking refuge and her feeling of superiority indicates the power of her cultural conditioning: 'I am come home because I'm unhappy, and I mean to be a gypsy. I'll live *with you*, if you like, and I can teach you a great many things' (*MF*. p. 108, my italics). Susan Fraiman points out that 'Maggie's foolish misconceptions about the gypsies, her laughable arrogance about schooling and governing them, also lampoon this particular narrative of self-definition through domination, including Tom's domestic variety of it'.²⁰ Fraiman argues in a similar way that 'Maggie's eagerness to explain who Columbus was – "a very wonderful man, who found out half the world" – makes explicit the colonial mission she has assigned herself, and it is an eminently masculine one'.²¹ Margaret Homans, on the other hand, taking a class-based approach, suggests that the term "queen" used by Maggie 'is actually middle-class ideology masked as a universal'.²² In my view Maggie unites both the masculine and the feminine when she imagines herself as Queen of the gypsies, instructing and ruling them as her inferiors despite, or because of, her own treatment as an inferior in her family. Nevertheless, the gypsies do not wish

¹⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 130.

²⁰ Susan Fraiman, 'The Mill on the Floss', p. 142.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 142.

to be lead by Maggie, and cannot even supply 'bread and butter' for her. Thus, Eliot problematizes Maggie's identification with and superiority over the gypsies and shows how she is challenged by their alien values and life style. Nevertheless this problematic encounter does emphasise Maggie's openness to the world beyond, and teaches her that stereotypical images of the 'other' do not correspond to the truth. In this sense, her experience indicates to the nineteenth century middle-class English reader that 'the other' is not simply there to be controlled and colonized.

This episode with the gypsies suggests Eliot's critical view of the imperial culture of English society, which has normalized the idea among its inhabitants that they can lead others as a superior race and culture, even if they are powerless in their own land.²³ Eliot's treatment of Maggie in this episode is gently mocking, questioning and sceptical as she subtly delineates her confusion and contradictory behaviour. There is here Eliot's characteristic multiplication of perspectives. Maggie has been an excluded 'other' in St Ogg's, and gypsies are also strangers to life there, yet these two cannot communicate and establish the kind of harmonized union that Maggie expects. Although the reader is made to feel sympathy with Maggie from the beginning, and Tom's views have been shown as oppressively narrow, it is his judgement that is confirmed by her experience with the gypsies. The 'other' is presented as complicated and multi-faceted whilst Maggie becomes a potential 'oppressor' representing the dominant norms of her culture. In this sense, her encounter with the gypsies both confuses and quickens her sense of her own culture and indicates the necessity of a wider vision. Eliot's first detailed experiment with the 'other' represented by the gypsies in this novel points to her

²² Margaret Homans, 'Dinah's Blush, Maggie's Arm: Class, Gender, and Sexuality in George Eliot's Early Novels', *Victorian Studies*, 36 (1993), 155-78, (p. 163).

²³ In this context see Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993).

criticism of imperial experience, and in this respect she cannot be considered as a writer who simply reproduces the ideological outlook of her time. Eliot is as implicitly critical of imperial arrogance as contemporary post-colonial critics would wish her to be.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator makes us aware of the paths open towards a larger world by using the river Floss as a metaphor. Later, after the narrator's meditation on the contrast between the Rhine and Rhone, the Floss is related to the latter as a great river that 'flows for ever onward, and 'links the small pulse of the old English town with the beatings of the world's mighty heart' (*MF*. p. 272). The river is used not only as a metaphor of connections with the larger world but also as hinting at Maggie's destiny. Her process of development 'is like the course of an unmapped river: we only know that the river is full and rapid, and that for all rivers there is the same final home' (*MF*. p. 402). Her first escape to the gypsies brings a form of awakening by problematizing the existence of other worlds different from St Ogg's, and her second 'escape' with Stephen intensifies her otherness. The latter escape is also important in that Maggie chooses to remain close to her roots for the first time in her life, rather than embracing the wider world that Stephen could have opened to her. The Dutch vessel that rescues them at the end of their fateful trip also recalls the possibility of a larger world, coming as it does from the other side of the North Sea. Nevertheless Maggie shrinks from the larger possibilities of life suggested by the foreign, and returns to her confined existence, made even narrower by ostracism.

At the end, Maggie dies in the waters of the Floss with their ironic reminder of the wider world that she is destined never to experience. However, the keynote of her death

is homecoming rather than frustrated yearning for escape. When she embarks on her desperate return to the mill to save her mother and Tom from the flood, her heartfelt cry of 'Oh God, where am I? Which is the way home?' is an expression of the deepest current of her short life (*MF*. p. 517). She finds her way home symbolically in the flooding Floss, for she is united literally with her brother and metaphorically with her maternal and paternal roots, in that it is the waters of the river that have driven her father's mill and may carry some association with the waters of the womb.

The circular plot of the novel starts and ends with the river. Whether that circle represents a benign return to origins, or the tragic frustration of progress is open to question. As Tom and Maggie row out onto 'the wide water' we are reminded of the potential that will never be fulfilled, and yet at the same time, there is a reconciliation of self and 'other' as Tom for the first time understands and accepts his sister. It could be argued that a synthesis of masculine and feminine, light and dark, Dodson and Tulliver is achieved in their final embrace. The homage that Stephen and Philip later pay to Maggie's grave may suggest that some seeds of hope for future generations may lie in this synthesis, attained at the cost of tragically curtailed lives, but while the Epilogue shows nature's powers of recovery and undiminished capacity to produce new life, it also insists that some scars are never healed: 'Nature repairs her ravages – but not all' (*MF*. p. 521).

The unhealed scars are the marks left by Maggie's alien presence on the narrow culture of English provincial life, and they are both a permanent source of grief and a breach in the pattern of convention that bears some promise for an unspecified future. Unhealed scars may be openings onto the unknown, although that possibility is not realized here but left to the ending of George Eliot's final novel *Daniel Deronda*, which presents just

such an opening in the lives of both Gwendolen and Daniel himself. In addition, the final image of Tom and Maggie's boat as 'a black speck on the golden water' anticipates Daniel's appearance to Mordecai in the visionary moment on Blackfriars Bridge (*MF*, p. 521).

CHAPTER FOUR

*Silas Marner: the alien versus the familiar***Introduction**

Following the practice of the Cabinet Edition of George Eliot's works, which published her shortest novel *Silas Marner* together with her short stories 'The Lifted Veil' and 'Brother Jacob' in 1878, I am going to examine these works in the same chapter.¹ Of course, the justification for doing this does not lie only in the method of their publication, for there are other features that they have in common and which can make juxtaposition illuminating.² They all display characters who are aliens or exiles, cut from their families.³ Silas Marner, Latimer and David Faux represent, to some extent, modern men, who are rootless, who live in isolation, and who are marginal to Eliot's imagined English rural community.⁴ Eliot's handling of each of these characters reveals her multi-dimensional vision once again, and brings the outsider, the embodiment of a form of foreignness, into the very centre of traditional English life. The result of this encounter is complicated and left ambiguous for the most part; although it is clear that sympathy with, and understanding of, the perspective of the 'other' is achieved at the end of each story, while narrow materialism is reproved. In the first section of this chapter, these points will be looked at in detail, in order to trace the effect of the foreign

¹ These three stories were written in the same period; 'The Lifted Veil' was published in 1859, 'Brother Jacob' and *Silas Marner* were written in the following year. *Silas Marner*, 'The Lifted Veil', 'Brother Jacob', ed. by Peter Mudford (London: Everyman, 1996). References to this edition will be given within the text.

² F. B. Pinion argues that the theme of 'The Lifted Veil' is 'comparable to that of *Silas Marner* in reverse', and is a pole apart from 'Brother Jacob', (p. 126). *A George Eliot Companion: Literary Achievement and Modern Significance* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

³ Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), particularly the chapter on 'Crusoe's Island Exile', provides a useful argument in the context of exile, home and imagination.

⁴ Michael Wolff says that 'Silas is a quasi-Utopian fable about the lost world of Warwickshire', p. 59.

in *Silas Marner*. The second half of this chapter will examine the two short stories ‘The Lifted Veil’ and ‘Brother Jacob’.

Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe is in many respects, a turning point in Eliot’s development as a novelist. It is written in the middle of her career and mediates between her earlier provincial and later cosmopolitan novels. The first chapters of my thesis have concentrated on the elements of Englishness and Eliot’s presentation of them, as the first stage of my investigation into Eliot’s portrayal of the complicated encounter with the foreign in English life. In the earlier novels the foreign mostly takes the form of something strange, unknown to the world of provincial English life, and there are only a few references to actual foreign countries, cultures and people. In the later novels after *Silas Marner*, the foreign and the encounter with it are more fully but also more ambiguously presented, and this ambivalence is seen as a basic feature of English life in a wider sense. Intense ambivalence in *Felix Holt* becomes a ‘need for foreignness’ in *Middlemarch*, and in *Daniel Deronda* the foreign takes centre stage while Englishness remains in the background.

Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe

At first glance *Silas Marner* is ‘another English story’, as Eliot wrote to Blackwood, and it came across her plans to write a ‘historical romance’, which was to be *Romola* (*Letters*, III, p. 339). However, looking at it more closely, it is obvious that it is not narrowly English and rural, since Eliot emphatically links the story of ‘old-fashioned village life’ (*Letters*, III, p. 371-72) to the outer world. The story of an old linen-weaver which remained in her memory is transformed into a realistic account of the weaver’s legend. It is indeed a story of transformation from isolation in a closely-knit community

to interaction with humanity in the broader sense.⁵ While exploring the setting of ordinary, English daily life as in previous novels, this novel insists upon the elements of strangeness that lie within the English provincial world. The ordinary and the alien combine in Silas and the idea of the foreign emerges at crucial moments in the form of an alien outsider, a wanderer or a pedlar.

There are some points which make this novel unique among Eliot's novels. Firstly, it tells a different story of the individual and his relation to the community, in so far as the main character Silas is both an alien and an outsider, living in isolation in a rural world for fifteen years. His alienation highlights his rootlessness. His national and social identity is questioned in the first half of the novel. He is not representative of patriarchal masculinity or of Englishness, and he is neither a member of the rural community nor a town man. He belongs nowhere; he has no family and no relations. In this sense, he can be regarded as the first example of a modern man, a wanderer among Eliot's characters and a forerunner of figures like Ladislav in *Middlemarch*, and Daniel Deronda in her last novel. Their alienation, however, is presented as positive and enlarging unlike the narrowing and monotonous experience of Silas.

Secondly, Eliot opens the novel with an epigraph from Wordsworth, which recalls the image of the child in Romantic philosophy as the symbol of innocence: 'A Child, more than all other gifts that earth can offer to declining man, brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts'. In Romantic belief, the child is believed to lead man to the truth, and Wordsworth's epigraph indicates how Silas's life will be restored by finding

⁵ See *Letters* III, pp. 382-83.

connections with his past and with nature.⁶ The figure of the child is not common in Eliot's novels, as she mainly focuses on the lives of the young adults, but this novel brings a child into the life of an old man and changes his vision altogether. Silas's narrow materialism changes after his contact with the child who crawls through the half-open door and opens up a new existence for him. He has been living like an insect, hidden from the outside world and the community, until this miracle happens, and the remainder of Eliot's narrative tells of the reintegration of the once isolated but enlarged Silas into the life of the wider community.

Another difference from the earlier novels is that this novel intertwines the story of Silas with that of Godfrey Cass by means of coincidental links rather than familial ones.⁷ The relations of these plots have been studied before by a number of critics, but what I would like to emphasise is that this novel pursues Eliot's moral aim of relating the individual to the community and the community to the wider world, but does so in a new way.⁸ Each side of the plot tells us a different story and represents a different ideology, in that Silas is a weaver, a working man and an outsider, whereas Godfrey is the heir to an estate, the young squire, and a landed member of the rural community. Their fates are brought together by the contrasting terms of materialism and sympathy. Silas loses his gold and is changed for the positive with the coming of Eppie, whereas Godfrey, in order to secure his inheritance, egoistically remains silent over many long years and avoids his paternal responsibility for his little daughter. Contrasting concepts

⁶ On Wordsworth and Romanticism see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁷ E. D. Ermarth, in 'George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 40: 1 (1985), 23-42, points out that the central characters in *Silas Marner* are linked, not by blood ties or legal ties as they are in the first two novels, but by accidents of neighbourhood, (pp. 33-34). Q. D. Leavis, in her introduction to *Silas Marner*, highlights a similar vision arguing that we can see how 'in the symbolic confrontation scenes in *Felix Holt* and in the use of poetic symbolism in *Middlemarch*, the discoveries made in *Silas Marner* have been consolidated', (p. 43). *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

of sympathy and materialism, the familiar and the foreign are clearly explored and are brought together in a synthesis at the end of the novel. In this sense *Silas Marner* presents some essential features of Eliot's fiction more openly than her earlier works, and forms a basis for her cosmopolitan novels to come.

Silas, the Alien

Eliot opens this novel by presenting the general superstitious opinions held by the villagers about people who are different from them, and in particular, about Silas while the tone of the narrator obviously reproves their attitude. Similar to the opening of 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story' in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, where Eliot presents a discussion among local people of Mrs. Gilfil's foreignness, in *Silas Marner* she displays the sceptical attitude of the villagers towards the foreign. The narration distinguishes Silas both in general terms and in specific ones, and this indicates that Eliot wishes to show her readers that it is not only Silas who is subjected to the hostility and suspicion of the provincial inhabitants, but that a general outlook is here represented.⁹ The people of Raveloe regard the weaver in prejudiced fashion as an unfamiliar, mysterious and alien being.¹⁰ There are a number of justifications for the villagers' opinions of the foreign in general such as physical, geographical and vocational differences, and Silas's origin combines them all.

⁸ See E. D. Ermarth, 'George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy', p. 34.

⁹ Nancy L. Paxton, in *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) suggests that Eliot has a similar analysis to Spencer in 'the perception and interpretation of the Unknown', complicated by 'human subjectivity', (p. 96).

¹⁰ The first type of knowledge in Spinoza's philosophy, confused knowledge through 'imagination', is presented here in the form of gossip and calumny. For discussion of Spinoza's three kind of knowledge see Andrew B. Lynn, 'Bondage, Acquiescence, and Blessedness', p. 33.

Silas's alienation is related to his physical difference as 'one of these alien-looking men' and as one of those undersized men who 'looked like the remnants of a disinherited race'. Unlike Eliot's earlier rural character Adam Bede, who is mentally and physically strong, and identified with his regional and racial roots, Silas is physically weak, does not appear to represent the English race at all, and he comes to the village as an apparently rootless and homeless itinerant¹¹:

No one knew where *wandering men* had *their homes or their origin*; and how was a man to be explained unless you at least knew somebody who knew his father and mother? To the peasants of old times, *the world outside their own* direct experience was a region of vagueness and mystery: to their untravelled thought a state of wandering was a conception as dim as the winter life of the swallows that came back with the spring; and even a settler, if he came from *distant parts*, hardly ever ceased to be viewed with a remnant of distrust [...] (*SM*. p. 3, my italics).

The episode above clearly shows the immediate antipathy of the villagers to the 'other'. In their micro-nationalistic approach, they immediately distrust people who have no local connections. Distant parts for them are objects of suspicion and distrust. This narrow view of distant parts and outsiders, which has been glimpsed in the earlier fiction, is now extended to the whole novel in *Silas Marner*.

The next step in distinguishing Silas as an alien is still general and relates to his occupational and regional differences as a weaver, a man with a trade, and from a Northern town.

In this way it came to pass that those scattered linen-weavers – *emigrants from the town into the country* – *were to the last regarded as aliens by their rustic neighbours*, and usually contracted the eccentric habits which belong to a state of loneliness (*SM*. p. 4, my italics).

¹¹ See Q. D. Leavis, *Silas Marner*, Introduction, for the comparison of Adam Bede as a superior type of man and Silas. p. 15.

In a parallel way to the previous passage, this short passage underlines the damaging effects of the villagers' prejudices. It also indicates that their views are not easily changed, as they live an old-fashioned life where traditions and habits play a crucial part in creating the bonds of community. Finally the general yields to the particular, and Silas is introduced:

It was fifteen years since Silas Marner had first come to Raveloe; he was then simply a pallid young man, with prominent, short-sighted brown eyes, whose appearance would have had *nothing strange for people of average culture and experience*, but for the villagers near whom he had come to settle it had mysterious peculiarities which corresponded with the exceptional nature of his occupation, and his advent from an *unknown region called 'North'ard'* (SM. p. 5-6, my italics).

The villagers, whose experiences are regarded as narrower than those of average people, consider Silas to be mysterious because he comes from an unknown region, which is in fact not far from their village. Eliot's broad point of view serves to enlarge that of her average readers who were probably not much different in their attitudes from the villagers she criticises here. Eliot's cosmopolitan perspective depicts the effects of the outsider on the narrow world of the villagers.

The second chapter concentrates on Silas's background and examines his experience of exile in terms of a cultural encounter, stressing that it is difficult '[e]ven [for] people whose lives have been made various by learning' to be 'transported to *a new land*' where ways of living differ very much from their 'habitual views of life' (SM. p. 14, my italics). These pages prepare the ground for Silas's gradual isolation in his new setting of Raveloe. The encounter with the 'foreign' world of the village is shocking to him at first. The effect in the long term is his alienation from the local community on the basis of a tacit mutual understanding with the villagers to leave one another alone, since both parties have a very limited knowledge of each other, and are not open minded enough to start a process of communication. The lack of interaction between different levels of

society is questioned here, by showing that both parties lose from it. Silas's life is reduced to the 'unquestioning activity of a spinning insect' (*SM*. p. 16) as he works day and night weaving like a spider. He is not strong enough to widen his pathway, or create a new one; instead, he chooses to reduce his life to a monotonous activity, which require no thought or intellect. His sympathy for others also dies, because the 'old narrow pathway' for feelings is abandoned through the sudden effect of a new kind of life. He narrows himself, and the consequences of this narrowing are explored in the remainder of the novel.

The lifelong day he sat in his loom, his ear filled with its monotony, his eyes bent close down on the slow growth of sameness in the brownish web [...] (*SM*. p. 20).

He becomes short-sighted both literally and metaphorically for many years, and concentrates only on the familiar objects around him. (A similar image is used for Lydgate during the gambling scene in *Middlemarch*, to show how his outlook has been narrowed down into the monotonous action of playing billiards for money). Silas spends fifteen years in monotony and sameness, progressively adopting the narrow materialism of the miser. The sameness of the activity lies in the nature of his occupation, but it makes him what the villagers have prejudged him to be. In this sense, the villagers are right to consider the occupation of weaving as a strange way of living, and to believe that it might have connections with Evil. As readers, we know that the villagers are false in their superstitious belief, but we also are aware that Silas has been wasting his life and, indeed, has fallen prey to a form of evil.

The incident that changes Silas's life is also related to his narrow materialism when his gold, cared for and counted every day for years, is suddenly stolen. It starts a new phase in his life after which he begins to be reconciled with the community of Raveloe. When

his gold is stolen, he returns to being human, recognising that it is only in a human community that he can share his sorrow.

This strangely novel situation of opening his trouble to his Raveloe neighbours, of sitting in the warmth of a hearth not his own, and feeling the presence of faces and voices which were his nearest promise of help, had doubtless its influence on Marner, in spite of his passionate preoccupation with his loss (*SM*. p. 57).

Communication with the villagers begins with the loss of his gold and is intensified after the arrival of the child, who plays the role of a catalyst through which Eliot's moral experiment is performed. The child represents the values of innocence, hope and enlargement and teaches them to Silas who welcomes the little infant into his lonely, alienated existence.¹²

The gold had kept his thoughts in an ever-repeated circle, leading to nothing beyond itself; but *Eppie was an object compacted of changes and hopes* that forced his thoughts onward, and carried them far away from their old eager pacing towards the same blank limit – carried them away to the new things that would come with the coming years [...]. The gold had asked that he should sit weaving longer and longer, *deafened and blinded* more and more to all things except *the monotony of his loom* and the repetition of his web [...] (*SM*. p. 125, my italics).

The child is directly contrasted to gold, as innocence to materialism. Gold represents the narrowness of the materialistic outlook which has deafened and blinded Silas. The dullness and sameness of the monotonous activity of weaving has transferred itself to his life, and now the child alters him, bringing a new consciousness of changes and hopes by enlarging his life. The repetitive sameness of his weaving is exchanged for the changing and developing demands of daily childcare.

¹² As in Herbert Marcuse's, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1954) the figure of the child represents innocence and the re-establishment of society. Eppie both as an infant and as a grown up girl chooses Silas, who has been considered an alien by the community.

This encounter has an immediate positive effect on Silas's life. It teaches him to sympathize, enlarges his understanding and thus reintegrates him into the Raveloe community through the love and sympathy that a child both requires and returns.

As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness (*SM*. p. 126).

The child restores his attachment to the past as well as to the future, and makes him reconcile himself with his roots as he remembers his mother and his little sister and names the child after them. Silas, in this sense, finds his connections and his family again. The child enlarges his vision, whereas the gold reduced his humanity. The child reawakens sympathy towards others in Silas, and he in turn is rewarded for this.

Eliot carefully relates the conditions in Raveloe to Englishness. Raveloe is situated at the centre of 'Merry England', is identified with Englishness and represents typical rural England, whose landscape is unspoilt by industrialisation and whose traditional way of life is 'undrowned by new voices'.

And Raveloe was a village where many of the old echoes lingered, undrowned by new voices. Not that it was one of those barren parishes lying on the outskirts of civilization – inhabited by meagre sheep and thinly-scattered shepherds: on the contrary, it lay in the rich central plain of what we are pleased to call *Merry England* [...] (*SM*. p. 5, my italics).

Landscape and community are in unity and the dialogue between the villagers reveals them to be members of an idyllic community, displaying good will and sympathy towards those who are like them. Rural traditions and customs link them to one another, while putting distance between them and other regions even though the latter may not be very far away. The villagers are ignorant about the life and beliefs of Lantern Yard, and would regard it as entirely alien to their small, homogenous, homely village. Eliot's subtle moral imagination transports Silas from the outside world into this community so

that the encounter with the other can be mutual and educative. For the first time in Eliot's novels, a rank outsider comes into the rural world of the traditional English village, bringing news from the outer world. The community neutralizes Silas's national identity, and moreover marginalizes him on account of his occupation, his hometown and his physical appearance. The dominant ideology imposes established beliefs upon the newcomer in order to normalise him and to make him the 'same'. Yet, Silas is different, and it is this difference which makes Raveloe more interesting, and which questions and corrects the false images attributed to the foreign. Mass homogeneity is not admired by Eliot who believes it reduces distinctions and individuality. Characters like the inhabitants of Raveloe, who have not encountered the foreign and who display 'untravelling thought', have not been developed towards a full-consciousness of the self, the other and the world in general. Their estimations are more limited and subjective than those of people who have experienced the variety of the world.

In this novel, the sceptical attitude of rural people to those who are racially, culturally or regionally different is criticised in the direct statements of the narrator. One of the manoeuvres Eliot seems to be using is the rural image of the shepherd in order to compare the different world-views of the local and the outsider. At the very beginning, when the narrator establishes the superstitious beliefs of the rural people about 'wandering men', the shepherd is installed as an essential figure of the rural life.

The *shepherd's dog* barked fiercely when one of these alien-looking men appeared on the upland, dark against the early winter sunset; for what dog likes a figure bent under a heavy bag? – and these pale men rarely stirred abroad without that mysterious burden. The *shepherd himself*, though he had good reasons to believe that the bag held nothing but flaxen thread, [...] was not quite sure that this trade of weaving, indispensable though it was, could be carried on entirely without the help of the Evil One (*SM*. p. 3, my italics).

The shepherd represents the local inhabitants who approach the outsider questioningly and this image recurs in the Introduction to *Felix Holt*, in which the shepherd distinguishes his life both from that of the passenger who travels through different landscapes, and also from that of government over which he has no power.

Another manoeuvre Eliot uses to criticise the prejudices of the rural people is seen in her handling of the theft from Silas's home. Her criticism produces fresh images of the narrow perspectives of both the individual and the community in Raveloe. The stereotypical negative image of the foreign is shown in the way the villagers immediately jump to the conclusion that it must be the pedlar who has stolen Silas's money.

[...] An inquiry was set on foot concerning a pedlar, name unknown, with curly black hair and a *foreign complexion*, carrying a box of cutlery and jewellery, and wearing large rings in his ears (*SM*. p. 75, my italics).

The villagers' response to the theft of Silas's gold shows how they immediately and superstitiously suspect outsiders of being responsible for any crime. Their set of shared beliefs is questioned through this mocking episode. The idea, briefly touched upon in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story' in *Scenes of Clerical Life* when the local people attribute any crime to foreigners, is carried further in this incident. Ironically enough, contrary to the judgements of the villagers, it is Dunstan Cass, the second son of the old Squire, who has stolen the gold. The falsity of the collective image of the foreign is thus underlined by the fact that the real criminal is a member of the local gentry, a figure who stands at the centre of English rural life. The limited horizons of English culture implied in this view that the thief must be a foreigner wearing gold earrings are ridiculed, questioned and unsettled by allowing the reader to know the identity of the real thief beforehand.

Criticism of narrow Englishness is sharpened in the second half of the plot, which traces the fortunes of the Cass family. Chapter 3 specifies the historical period of the action: the events in the novel take place during the Napoleonic Wars and the Casses can be seen to represent the upper class in the rural England of the time. Squire Cass keeps his two sons at home, Godfrey the elder has a secret wife, and Dunstan the younger enjoys drinking and betting. Dunstan blackmails Godfrey, threatening to tell Squire Cass about Godfrey's secret marriage to a drunken wife, and thus make him lose his inheritance. Godfrey, the first son abandons his wife and his child in order to secure his inheritance by getting married to Nancy Lammeter. Eliot problematizes the theme of inheritance in the land-owning class, which is briefly mentioned in *Scenes of Clerical Life* in relation to Captain Wybrow, in *Adam Bede* with Arthur Donnithorne, and indicated to some extent in *The Mill on the Floss* with Tom. The second son syndrome, which will be extended in *Felix Holt*, is exemplified by Dunstan who finally steals Silas's gold. It is not so much the general system of inheritance in England that is criticized but the individual failures and self-interests of characters who fall victim to a narrow materialism.

The philosophy of the Casses involves gaining easily from someone else's loss and it is punished when Dunstan is drowned with the gold he has stolen from Silas. The place and manner of Dunstan's death reflect the allegorical as well as the realistic dimension of the narrative and show the crucial consequences of his egoism. Godfrey marries Nancy and takes over the estate as expected, but ironically cannot become a father (even to his existing daughter). To intensify the crucial contradictions in the Casses' behaviour, Eliot reveals the identity of the thief who stole Silas's gold on the same day that Godfrey reveals his fathership to Eppie. In their pursuit of literal gold the Casses lose the metaphorical gold of love represented by Eppie. Godfrey acts in the opposite

way in relation to the same values; he turns his back on both his wife and his child in his selfish outlook, and is punished for it. Materialism and sympathy confront each other at crucial points, and Silas succeeds in extricating himself from his narrow materialism by learning to love and to sympathise.¹³

Justice is achieved obviously and for everybody in this novel, probably for the first and the last time in Eliot's novels. At the end, the different views of Silas and Godfrey come into direct confrontation and Silas is rewarded for his sympathy. A kind of unity is achieved by Eppie's choice of Silas as her father, for upper class rural blood is united with a member of the working class and one who is urban by origin. A synthesis is accomplished in this novel by bringing the village and the town, isolation and community, materialism and sympathy together, and it offers a realistic perspective on a legendary set of relations in the imagined village of Raveloe. When Silas tries to discover the urban world of his origins, the image of home is first destroyed since a factory has swept away Lantern Yard, leading him to conclude: 'The old home's gone; I have no home but this now'. Then it is restored to him, for he realizes that he has created a new home for himself rather than simply inheriting one as in a traditionally settled community. The past may be lost, but he has performed the necessary task of acknowledging it, so that now he can move forward as a man restored to wholeness and a new largeness of vision.

¹³ The theme of sympathy continues as a background idea in this novel as in others, and is closely related to the idea of the foreign. Interaction between two objects, cultures or people can only be achieved with sympathy.

‘The Lifted Veil’

‘The Lifted Veil’ is a unique story in Eliot’s work for many reasons; it is narrated in the first person, it has supernatural elements, and it uses a foreshadowing device in relation to different periods of Latimer’s life. It has also some modern elements such as a ‘nationless’ wanderer, having almost no connections in the world, and to some extent juxtaposed to English life. The experimental gothic form of the story is combined with the usual realistic outlook of George Eliot.

The main character and narrator, Latimer, is a bizarre young man with a sensitive mind and a weak body. The story begins with his prediction of how he is going to die, and ends after he has told his life story and brought the story back to his present situation in a circular movement. The present is connected to the past and to the future, and the boundary between the ‘known’ and the ‘unknown’ is delicately exposed. Latimer feels estranged from both his family and his nationality. He is attached neither to his father nor to his brother, the first born-son who is to be the representative and successor of the father, and who goes to Eton and Oxford to make connections. ‘Alfred from whom [he] had been almost constantly separated’ seems to Latimer to be ‘a perfect stranger’ (‘LV’. p. 197). The second son Latimer is sent abroad to finish his course of education. His father is a rich banker who ‘disapproves of his impractical and unscientific son’, but offers him the opportunity of a European tour.

Half of the story takes place in Europe and the second half in England. The details of Latimer’s journey indicate the shallowness of the habit of travelling for the sake of following the popular fashion of rich Englishmen visiting a foreign country. But the foreign setting is one that brings a new and disturbing power of vision: ‘Latimer’s imaginative “gifts” originate on the continent, but withdrawal and isolation are their

result'.¹⁴ He discovers he has a supernatural power to read minds and to see into the future, but this form of mental enlargement and heightened vision is in no sense positive, for it merely increases his estrangement. He lives as an alien inwardly distant from people of every sort. He seems to be a potential 'Melchisedech,' the happy man with no connections, but with the significant difference that his alienness does not inspire happiness.¹⁵ Latimer's estrangement, only leads to his deeper isolation in society, and he is unique among Eliot's outsider characters in this respect.

This story is unique also for emphasising antipathy as the core of the feelings of characters towards one another. Latimer himself strongly feels it for his brother, of whom he is jealous in relation to Bertha. In his double consciousness he foresees his brother's death, which will leave Bertha free to accept Latimer himself. They eventually do marry, but antipathy is the result of this union. Recalling and writing his own story, Latimer recognises his egoism, which is the central failing of characters in Eliot's fictional world. Lack of sympathy for the 'other' cannot lead to anything positive, as Latimer experiences.

We try to believe that egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hemmed in our generosity, our awe, our human piety, and hindered them from submerging our hard indifference to the sensations and emotions of our fellow. Our tenderness and self-renunciation seem strong when our egoism has had its day – when, after our mean striving for a triumph that is to be another's loss [...] ('LV'. p. 204).

Happiness cannot be established through 'another's loss', as Eliot repeatedly insists, and the 'narrowness of our knowledge' is always the enemy of generosity and humanity in her moral teaching.

¹⁴ Kevin Ashby, 'The Centre and the Margins in "The Lifted Veil" and Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*', 24-25, *GE-GHLS*, (1993), 132-146, (p. 132).

When Latimer marries Bertha the general opinion is that 'a graceful, brilliant woman', has acquired an 'imbecile' husband. Latimer the narrator, naturally enough, disapproves of people who thus 'judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate' ('LV'. p. 215). He can see that Bertha's soul is 'narrow', but despite his supernatural power, he has no ability to change the impression of strangeness and imbecility that he makes on others. (The image of an imbecile husband and a brilliant wife is repeated in *Felix Holt* with the Transomes, where the husband is drawn almost as a wild animal and is never allowed to speak). Socially he remains powerless and estranged, and not only is his heightened vision not accompanied by any capacity to influence the real world, it also cannot be equated with any moral enlargement, since he remains entirely without sympathy for others. In this story contact with foreign places and the possession of strange power do not contribute to moral education and advancement. Bertha may exemplify the kind of narrowness that Eliot always criticizes; after her separation from Latimer she remains 'in her own neighbourhood, the mistress of half [their] wealth' ('LV'. p. 225), thus displaying the parochialism and materialism that mark most of Eliot's egoists. But Latimer achieves nothing either, simply becoming a wanderer in foreign countries. 'The Lifted Veil' is a case apart in George Eliot's fiction, for here the encounter with the foreign and the ability to understand other people clearly do not broaden the mind or increase the capacity for sympathy.

There may be some parallels in later works: neither Harold Transome in *Felix Holt* nor Lydgate in *Middlemarch* is unambiguously enlarged by his experience abroad, but

¹⁵ Melchisedech is mentioned by Eliot in a letter to Cara Bray [1 May 1850] shortly after her return from Geneva when she finds herself painfully isolated within her family.

neither character is as isolated and devoid of sympathy as Latimer, whose moral opposite is to be found in the figure of Daniel Deronda in Eliot's last novel, where antipathy is transformed into a sympathy that connects both individuals and communities with one another.

'Brother Jacob'

'Brother Jacob, like *Silas Marner* and 'The Lifted Veil', presents a character isolated from his community for specific reasons. The idea of strangeness is employed in a different way in this short story, as the main character David Faux prefers to be a stranger twice in his life and disidentifies with his name, with his family and with his hometown. He can be accepted as unique in the sense that he rejects all aspects of his identity and his roots. The invisible pressure of his culture is, nevertheless, not diminished by his disidentification with his roots. He steals his mother's savings to satisfy his ambition and escapes to the West Indies in order to set up a profitable business and acquire wealth as a member of a superior race. Eliot does not allow him to prosper in his business in the colonial territory, which he thought would be an empty place that he could control and manipulate – the kind of belief that Edward Said has defined as a significant feature of a typical colonialist. Things develop contrary to his expectations and he leaves the West Indies to come back to England, if not back home. His ambitious personality prevents him from going home and he starts a confectionery store in Grimworth, where nobody knows him.

David's national and class identity is suggested at the beginning of the story through a list of his domestic habits as 'a British yeoman, who had been fed principally on salt pork and yeast dumplings' ('BJ'. p. 229). The following paragraphs move from his

Englishness to his individual preferences and his conviction that he 'ought to become something remarkable' ('BJ'. p. 230). The narrator's mocking tone from the beginning associates his superficial identity with stereotypical images of the foreign.

When a man is not adequately appreciated or comfortably placed in his own country, his thoughts naturally turn towards foreign climes; and David's imagination circled round and round the utmost limits of his geographical knowledge, in search of a country where a young gentleman of pasty visage, [...] would be likely to be received with the hospitable enthusiasm. [...] Having a general idea of America as a country where the population was chiefly black, it appeared to him the most propitious destination for an emigrant [...] under easier circumstances [...] ('BJ'. p. 231).

David's attitude towards the 'black' population recalls Maggie's misplaced ideas about the lives of the gypsies, but he has not the excuse of being a child and is presented as constantly unsympathetic. In his superficial knowledge of the foreign David has similarities not only with Maggie but also with Harold Transome, who sets out for Constantinople planning to be a diplomat, but ends up trading and buying a slave in Smyrna. His imagined land is also full of exotic elements: '[s]uch a striking young man as he would be sure to be well received in the West Indies: in foreign countries there are always openings – even for cats. It was probable that some Princess Yarico would want him to marry her' ('BJ'. p. 237). His superficial understanding of the foreign is ridiculed by this reference to the story of 'Inkle and Yarico', and by his actual experience.

He had looked forward [...] to a brilliant career among 'the blacks'; but, either because they had already seen too much white man, or for some other reason, they did not at once recognise him as a superior order of human being; besides, there were no princesses among them ('BJ'. p. 257).

Unlike Harold, David cannot satisfy his masculine imagination in the exotic location, yet like Harold he is associated with a false type of masculine power. Back in England, he boasts of his success 'more than hinting at a life of Sultanic self-indulgence which he had passed in the West Indies' ('BJ'. p. 249).

When he returns to England we see once again how the local people speculate about the new-comer, the stranger whom 'nobody knows' in Grimworth. This time the population is divided in their various opinions on how to behave towards the stranger. The tradespeople at Grimworth speculate that 'the sallow-complexioned stranger was about to set up in the vacant shop' believing that 'when people came from nobody knew where, there was no knowing what they might do' ('BJ'. p. 243). Most of them feel as in the previous novels that '[i]n the first place, he was a stranger, and therefore open to suspicion; secondly, the confectionery business was so entirely new at Grimworth, that its place in the scale of rank had not been distinctly ascertained' ('BJ'. p. 248). Hostility to David as a newcomer is accompanied by an uncertainty aroused by the novelty of his trade as in the case of Silas. The story thus presents a complex critique of cultural prejudice in a similar way to Maggie's encounter with the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*. David is both the subject and the object of an encounter with the foreign. He has entertained the stereotypical imperial belief that he could easily rule and dominate foreigners, but unable to do so, he is put in the position of being a suspect foreigner himself when he returns to Grimworth to settle after his adventurous experience abroad. The reaction of the inhabitants in Grimworth is not generous and welcoming to somebody who does not belong to their town and whose trade is totally new. This play with the idea of the foreign complicates David's role for the reader, since having in his ignorance gone to America to dominate the inferior 'blacks', he is welcomed neither by the blacks nor by people back in England, although for different reasons. In this sense, David seems to be the kind of average Englishman Eliot criticized in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* for his narrow knowledge of other cultures. The foreign is handled differently from the way that it is in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story' in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, or in *Silas Marner*, where the reactions of the local people are shown to be stereotypically wrong. In this story the local people's suspicion of the foreigner is

shown to be fully justified when David's real identity is uncovered at the end and he is unmasked as a thief. Commonplace prejudices can sometimes strike the truth and not all outsiders deserve sympathy and understanding.

Conclusion

Similar to the revelation of the real thief in *Silas Marner* and the true identity of Bertha in 'The Lifted Veil,' 'Brother Jacob' ends by revealing David's real identity, in a sense lifting the veil. (Another character whose veil will be lifted in a later novel is Bulstrode, who like David, gains his wealth through illegal means in *Middlemarch*). These three characters, Silas, Latimer and David are a challenge to the sympathetic imagination though only Silas is shown to be deserving of sympathy. It is entirely characteristic of George Eliot's differentiating vision that she avoids a schematic approach to the figure of the alien and the experience of the foreign. Whether the former deserves sympathy or the latter enlarges the understanding depends on the individual case, on a carefully discriminating assessment of individual character and moral capacity.

In her earliest novels Eliot repeatedly declared her concern with the normal, the ordinary, and even the uninteresting; with *Silas Marner* she starts to call for sympathy for those who are different, alien and marginalized and the importance of the marginal even in provincial English life will be explored further in the novels to come. From now on the marginalized elements in English life will be more important than the ordinary ones, and as George Eliot's vision widens, the later novels will explore larger worlds and a greater variety of foreignness.

CHAPTER FIVE

Home and the Foreign in *Felix Holt, The Radical***Introduction**

Felix Holt starts with a survey of the provincial setting whose Englishness is underlined by description of the landscape and nostalgic remembrance of the past. The introduction begins with a unified and homogenous vision of Englishness, but ends with an impression of the varieties of English life. This shift is subtly achieved through a coach travelling from one district in the midlands landscape to another and from one phase of English life to another, where Englishness is illustrated through the values, traditions and lives of provincial people. The setting is remarkably English, effectively introducing the reader to the details of English life. The landscape, through which the imaginary coach journey progresses, evokes Eliot's recollections of an idyllic England. However, English provincial life is not exactly homogeneous but diverse and contrasting, and at one stage the setting changes to a manufacturing town, representing the values of the new age. Into this already changing and heterogeneous English setting, a foreign element is introduced by Harold Transome, an English landowner, who is returning home from abroad. The first chapters of the novel emphasise crucial differences and present comparisons between Harold and his 'home', moreover they reveal the clash between the English and the foreign. Eliot's challenge to the homogenous nature of English life is already visible in the introduction, and involves a redefinition of Englishness through the agency of Harold, his foreign ideas and experience in the ensuing chapters. The invisible features which constitute Englishness, crop up in individual experiences, and are questioned by foreignness.

The encounter with the foreign in *Felix Holt* is more complicated and ambivalent than in Eliot's earlier novels. The foreign forms the background of the whole novel. Even in the passages where Englishness is intensely exposed, the foreign is present in one form or another. As Barbara Hardy has pointed out, *Felix Holt* has 'the most famous English beginning [but] offers a powerful displacement of Anglo-centricity, giving more space to foreignness than previous novels'.¹ Hardy's observation that in *Felix Holt* 'foreignness makes the plot' is crucially related to my argument in that I see the foreign as determining the whole novel.² The plot, indeed, circulates around and has extensive connections with foreign elements, and both sides of the plot – the stories of Esther and Harold – are crucially influenced by the foreign.

Eliot creates complexity in her presentation of the foreign primarily by sending Harold off to the East prior to the start of the novel, for his identity is altered by the Eastern style of life, and this change is shown to be ambiguous rather than a definite enlargement. The English opening of the novel is interrupted by Harold's altered opinions on private and public matters, and foreignness is problematized by him as he represents both the national self and the other. This doubleness is indicated by Alicia Carroll in her recent study of *Felix Holt*, in which she stresses how this novel 'studies not just the English self's connection with the provincial community, but critically, the English self's connection to the wider, multicultural world'.³ Carroll similarly relates Harold Transome's adventure to British colonial experience and argues that Eliot 'creates a dialogue between otherness and desire' in this novel, suggesting that Eliot's narrator both 'identifies Harold with English imperialism' and puts him in a situation to

¹ Barbara Hardy, 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness', p. 8.

² *ibid.* p. 8

³ Alicia Carroll, 'The *Giaour's* Campaign: Desire and the Other in *Felix Holt*, *The Radical*', *Novel*, 30:2 (1997), 237-257, (p. 237).

pose 'a political and moral threat to the England to which he returns'.⁴ Carroll's reading of *Felix Holt*, together with Carolyn Lesjak's article, provide new perspectives on the novel in relation to culture and nationality. Carolyn Lesjak suggests that *Felix Holt* as an industrial novel in the 'newly-emerging experience and processes of modernity, cannot be understood outside the context of English nationalism and Empire'.⁵ The ambiguous perspective on the foreign is exposed through Harold Transome's experience in the novel, for his encounter with foreign culture leads him to abandon routine life and established structures in the arena of both family life and politics. Expanding her own horizons, Eliot's treatment of the English and the foreign in this novel diversifies the foreign and raises it to a more complex level.⁶ My reading, therefore, will focus on Eliot's complex, and multi-layered presentation of English life, which involves various dimensions of the foreign.

Travel to Variety

Travel is politicised by the narrator in the Introduction in order to form a dialogue between the past and the present, the self and the other, and home and abroad. Ways of travelling are both connected to stories of English life, and at the same time prepare the ground for Harold Transome's return to England. The coach journey emphasises the variety behind the apparent sameness of the midland landscape, presenting different prospects on the same journey, and the differing opinions of the traveller and the spectator. The variety of English life is observed by the passenger, who is the

⁴ Alicia Carroll, p. 237.

⁵ Carolyn Lesjak, 'A Modern Odyssey: Realism, the Masses, and Nationalism in George Eliot's *Felix Holt*', *Novel*, Fall (1996), 78-95, (p. 81).

⁶ Another difference from the earlier novels is that *Felix Holt*, inserts characters having coincidental bonds to one another which she has started in *Silas Marner* for the first time. The social panorama is widened and provincial milieu consists of people from various backgrounds. There is not only more space for the outsiders, but also the central outsider is an Englishman, contaminated by the foreign.

representative of the new age of mobility, trade and a dominant middle-class. Conflicting approaches within English life to Englishness itself function to eliminate the single perspective, and to emphasise the multi-dimensionality of social life. The later parts of the novel illustrate that each phase of English life has been touched in some way by the foreign.

Englishness is illustrated by the provincial people's desire to preserve their traditional way of life. The narrator proceeds to describe the 'slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other' on the outside of a stagecoach.⁷ The hypothetical 'tube-journey', which the narrator imagines for the future, hints at the modernisation of transportation, which, however, will decrease the emotional impact of the traditional journey in which 'the happy outside passenger seated on the box from the dawn to the gloaming gathered enough stories of *English life*' (*FH*. p. 3, my italics). The innovations of modern life, could thus be said to introduce increasing elements of foreignness, and this process of change can be seen in the course of Eliot's work as it moves from the Romantic world of rural life in *Adam Bede*, to the modern cosmopolitan world of *Daniel Deronda*.

The first story, or aspect, of English life encountered in the Introduction involves rural people, and a shepherd is seen in the background representing an idealised form of rural English life, one with nature, with the 'silvered meadows', 'the golden corn-ricks' and 'things very near the earth' (*FH*. p. 4). This world belongs to the shepherd, and it is a world in which the travellers are strangers and outsiders. Significantly, the shepherd, who is observed both by the coachman and by the passenger, is accorded opinions more

than the other two figures. The shepherd believes that the mail or stage coach 'belonged to that mysterious distant system of things called 'Gover'ment', which, whatever it might be, was no business of his, any more than the most out-lying nebula or the coal-sacks of the southern hemisphere: *his solar system was the parish*' (FH. p. 4, my italics). Two points deserve attention here: one is the narrator's attitude towards the shepherd as a pastoral figure and towards the passenger whose identity is unknown. The image of the shepherd (also employed at the beginning of *Silas Marner*), represents the nostalgic idea of the nation, the past and natural bonds, but his status, as the representative of idyllic rural life is problematised by the juxtaposition of his world with the passenger's. Government is not an essential concept for the shepherd, who at that time had no right to vote, and he is clearly aware of his otherness to the system the coach belongs to. While the shepherd's world is narrow and limited to the parish, the passenger has mobility.

The second and related point is that during the shepherd's brief encounter with the coach, the metaphorical distance between them is demonstrated by the use of geographical and astronomical metaphors. The narrator defines the shepherd's world in terms of his parochial solar system, whereas the passenger is thought to have links with 'Gover'ment'. The situation is seen and interpreted from the shepherd's point of view, and he is aware of how different his world is from that of 'the mysterious distant system', and this difference is more one of class than of culture and nation. The scene of observing and speculating about the other from a 'luxurious' shelter will recur in Dorothea's famous view from her window in *Middlemarch*. However, here, in *Felix Holt*, the shepherd, seen from the window of the coach, is given a voice. Unlike

⁷ For further discussion of the narrator's shifting voice and distance in this scene see Lyn Pykett, 'George Eliot and Arnold: The Narrator's Voice and Ideology in *Felix Holt, the Radical*', *Literature and History*,

Dorothea's experience, the encounter between the shepherd and the passenger serves to emphasise otherness rather than common humanity. For the shepherd, both the journey by coach, and the coach itself are manifestations of the political system in which the shepherd is placed as 'the other'. Nevertheless, both are aspects of English life and their juxtaposition here indicates the complexity of the national life in the modern world.

The tone of the narrator towards English life changes as the coach travels on and the passenger observes different people from different backgrounds. As the coach proceeds it has its blacksmith, basket-maker and wheelwright; clean and comely women, marble playing children, and rich farmers in the surrounding homesteads. This time the rich farmers distinguish the coach and its passenger from themselves, suggesting that it must be 'an accommodation for people who had not their own gigs, or who, wanting to travel to *London and such distant places*, belonged to the trading and *less solid part of the nation*' (FH. p. 5, my italics). Similar to the shepherd's reaction, the farmers define the difference in political terms, seeing the coach and the passenger as belonging to the 'other' part of the nation that is connected to trade and commerce. In this phase of English life, cosmopolitan life in London is accepted as different, and people living and trading there are looked down on.

Old England is associated with landowners, and the narrowness of their views is indicated through the passenger's observations. The passenger, who is prejudged by others as being part of a 'less solid part of the nation', is allowed to see that 'this was the district of protuberant optimists, sure that *old England was the best of all possible countries*' (FH. pp. 5-6, my italics). The farmers, it is implied, fail to realize signs of

positive progress in the present, and their inflexible ties to tradition and to the past are ironically delineated as narrow and complacent 'self-centredness'; 'if there were any facts which had not fallen under their own observation, they were facts not worth observing' (*FH.* p. 6). The scene changes as the sun sets, and the coach moves on to a manufacturing town where the air is full of 'eager unrest' and the complacent optimism of the rich farmers is reversed, for 'here was a population not convinced that old England was as good as possible' (*FH.* p. 6). The kind of Englishness represented by the upper-class landed gentry is questioned by the inhabitants of the new industrial towns.

None of the phases, seen through the passenger's eyes, as he 'passed rapidly from one phase of *English life* to another' can represent Englishness on its own (*FH.* p. 7, my italics). Englishness, Eliot aims to show, is a combination of different classes, cultural backgrounds, economic means and geographical areas.⁸ If one class ignores the necessity of another, the social panorama is not fully defined and society is not likely to prosper. The emphasis, therefore, shifts from the unified and homogenous nature of English rural life and a nostalgically recalled past to the differentiated and heterogeneous details presented in each example. The journey ends by insisting on differences. The passenger has observed different phases of English life through the coach's window, and the narrator turns his attention to the private and cultural dimension of that life at the end of the Introduction.⁹ After traversing the varieties of English life, the coach brings the reader to Transome Court in the last paragraphs of the

⁸ The idea that class difference is essential for the development of society is repeated in 'Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt'. At Blackwood's strong suggestions, Eliot develops the political opinions represented and addressed by Felix Holt in the novel, and the article is published in Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* in 1868.

Introduction, which set out the complicated family history of the Transomes and their inheritance of the estate. This glimpse of life behind the walls of the estate provided by the coachman introduces the inhabitants of Transome Court as a part of English life, and the rest of the novel problematizes its Englishness.

The Conflicting Home-coming

As the narrative follows the course of the coach journey and leads the reader to Transome Court, English landscape gives way to the domestic and national details of English life. Mrs Transome, as is hinted in the last paragraph of the introduction, has been longing for her son, who had gone to the East fifteen years ago. The epigraph preceding the first chapter similarly indicates nostalgic remembrance of the past, but ends with a contradictory note of suspense for the future. The mother has suffered and aged, and her longing for her son involves intense comparisons of the past and the future. The epigraph significantly ends in uncertainty creating doubt over the coming son.

[...] O, he is coming now – but I am grey:
And he – (*FH*. p. 12).

The outcomes of the past are obvious in the mother, yet the future is open and will be determined by him; nevertheless, the ensuing chapter will show that he has changed radically.

The first chapter opens by juxtaposing the political dimension with the private one, and continuing the sense of suspense, introduces foreign connections into English provincial

⁹ John Rignall, 'History and the "Speech of Landscape" in Eliot's Depiction of Midland Life', *GE-GHLS*, Sept (1993), 147-161. J. Rignall has pointed out that '[t]he coach journey through an initially sunlit and harmonious world thus ends in a private underworld of suffering', (p. 160).

life. 'On the 1st of September, in the memorable year 1832, someone was expected at Transome Court' (*FH.* p. 12). The reference to the Reform Bills passed in 1832 indicates that the unknown someone may have some political connections. It is also significant that the domestic space of the traditionally English estate is involved in social and political reform. Englishness is raised to a wider level of political experience, as Eliot juxtaposes Harold Transome's private experience with the political conditions of that time.¹⁰

Mrs Transome, already mentioned in the introduction, is the first member of the family introduced at Transome Court, and the rest of the family is presented in relation to her. She is portrayed as a strong, healthy, middle-aged, upper-class woman, who is lonely, both as a wife whose husband is weak, and as a mother, whose first son was 'a wild sort of half-natural' and whose younger one (whom she favoured) 'had gone to foreign parts' (*FH.* p. 9). Harold Transome is thus first mentioned both in relation to his mother's dependence on him, and in relation to his attachment to foreign lands, and those two relations indicate his hybridity. The narrator voices Mrs Transome's inward thoughts while she awaits the son's arrival, by referring to her son's portrait in the room. She looks at the portrait several times during the period of her anxious waiting. The picture dates from the time before his departure to the East, and represents the mother's interpretation of her son's appearance and identity. Kept hanging on the wall for fifteen years, it is a mark of the mother's devotion to her son and her expectation that he will prove to be unchanged. This picture of the young Harold stresses the

¹⁰ This type of introduction will be repeated in *Middlemarch* at the beginning of the chapter which takes Dorothea to Rome as a newly married bride. Dorothea is listed together with historical and political figures to emphasise her unhistorical fate, and moreover this contradictory picture is placed just prior to her encounter with Rome. In *Felix Holt*, in a similar way, the timing of the political references is just before Harold's return home. In both cases, the political conditions precede the private encounter with the foreign.

question of continuity between generations and this will be an issue both in respect to his own parentage and to the fact that he is bringing home with him a son who will be the heir to Transome Court.

A strong sense of strangeness is repeated in Harold's meeting with his mother, and this scene has two significant points which need to be stressed concerning cultural relativism. The long-expected son arrives home in foreign style, 'without a servant or much luggage', and described as having 'a dark face under a red travelling-cap' (*FH*. p. 16). The physical alterations in Harold's appearance, seen through his mother's eyes, point to deeper ones determined by his experience in the East. Despite the long years of waiting, the actual meeting of the mother and son is a short one. Mrs. Transome is startled as 'she hears herself called "Mother!" and felt a light kiss on each cheek; but stronger than all that sensation was the *consciousness* which no previous thought could prepare her for, that *this son* who had come back to her *was a stranger*' (*FH*. p. 16, my italics). Her son's foreignness strongly contrasts with the image of him she had kept in her memory for years, and contrary to a mother's natural relation to her child, she feels physical coldness towards her son. The shock of Harold's alteration gradually increases as their conversation continues and more clues about his identity are unveiled.

The most crucial moment of the mother's encounter with the son is exposed in a carefully constructed episode, which presents a step by step elucidation of Harold's changed identity, shifting between the physical and the political. Mrs Transome is represented as a custodian of Englishness, attached both to her son and to the social requirements of English life. She is identified with values which have been absent in Harold's Eastern adventure and already has plans to guide him about the requirements of a landholder in local English life: 'In this new acquaintance of theirs she cared

especially that her son, who had seen *a strange world*, should feel that *he was come home to a mother* who was to be consulted on all things, and who could supply his lack of the local experience necessary to an *English landholder*' (FH. p. 17, my italics). The sense of strangeness Mrs Transome attributes to her son's life in the East is directly related to the primary aspects of upper class Englishness – Toryism. She presumes that Harold's membership of the English social system needs to be restored with a strong sense of class-consciousness and national identity. Her view of Harold is one that makes no distinction between his personal, social and national identity, for all three are governed by class-consciousness and a sense of loyalty to the class he and she belong to. In her opinion, Harold must follow what his social status requires, even if he had developed Radical opinions in the exotic atmosphere of Smyrna. Her cultural narrowness is revealed in her own words and suggests a sense of duty towards her own culture and class, while prejudging the inferiority of the other.¹¹ A similar class-conscious maternal reaction will be both recapitulated and challenged on different occasions in *Daniel Deronda*, where another aristocratic mother Mrs Arrowpoint reacts with hostility to her daughter's engagement to Herr Klesmer, a foreign musician, and Alcharisi reacts in exactly the opposite way to cut the bonds of her son's responsibility to his social roots.

Unlike the physical alterations which have been observed by his mother, Harold's political alteration is announced by his own words following his short comments on his father and on his little son: the past and future members of Transome Court. This is the most crucial moment of Harold's encounter at home, as he declares his changed

¹¹ See *Felix Holt, the Radical*, ed. by Lynda Mugglestone (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 39. Hereafter further references will be given within the text.

political identity. The class-conscious Mrs. Transome counts on Harold to stand as a Tory candidate and he 'scandalously' announces that he is a 'Radical'.

'But I shall not be a Tory candidate.'

Mrs Transome felt something like an electric shock.

'What then?' she said, almost sharply. 'You will not call yourself a Whig?'

'*God forbid! I'm a Radical*' (FH. p. 18, my italics).

Harold's Radicalism has no place in Mrs Transome's Tory expectations, and intensifies his strangeness to his mother, who is accustomed to the dominant power of her class and her nation, and desires to remind her son of it. Even though she cannot estimate to what degree her son might have been changed due to his long absence from home, she predicts that he will miss many points of English life, about which he will need to consult her. Therefore anxiety about Harold's return has some affinities with the stereotypical images of the East and its inferior culture and religion. What is more, Harold, the object of Mrs Transome's critical observation does not give any signal that he wants to be led by his mother (or anyone else), and this point metaphorically recalls the paradoxical power relationship between the English and the foreign.¹² The oppressive imagination of Mrs Transome considers the other as ignorant, weak and in need of a controlling power and to some extent this other is represented by Harold for he has lived in a foreign culture. Implicitly, she prizes the idea of a homogenous community and thinks that it can be achieved by the transmission of cultural values from one generation to another. Such transmission has been interrupted, she fears, by Harold's long stay abroad and, indeed, the homecoming seems to prove the point by separating the mother and the son rather than uniting them. In other words, the self has turned into the other after encountering the foreign.

Following Harold's announcement of his Radicalism, his changed perceptions are associated by his mother with prominent changes in his life in Smyrna, and thus intertwined with broader dimensions.

Here was a revelation to which it seemed almost as impossible to adjust her hopes and notions of a dignified life as if her son had said that he had been converted to *Mahometanism at Smyrna*, and had four wives, instead of one son [...] (FH. p.18, my italics).

I shall return to this point later in this chapter where I will be examining the Eastern images represented in the novel. It is worth stating briefly here though that Mrs Transome's immediate linking of Harold's Radicalism to Islam has other connotations. One is that it shows a stereotypical approach towards the other religion and its social practices. Mrs. Transome's maternal reaction is perplexed and it displays a typical upper-class-woman's attitude towards a culture which is thought to 'disregard' women, when she finds Harold's political change as incomprehensible as if he had become a Muslim. Voicing the values of the English upper class, she conceives the eastern people, their life and culture as totally 'other' than her own.¹³ The novel, in general, raises questions about stereotypical images and creates a marginal figure with Harold Transome. The other is that Mrs Transome's reaction is questioned in the later episodes where it is indicated that if not married to four wives, Harold had at least indulged in other forms of exotic life. The distinctions between Eastern and Western life styles are reduced when Harold's marriage to a Greek slave is associated with imperial-masculine power.¹⁴

¹² This type of interaction is briefly portrayed in *The Mill on the Floss* when Maggie's stereotypical images of the gypsies are destroyed during her actual encounter with them. Similarly David's superfluous imagination of the blacks in 'Brother Jacob' end in frustration, showing that his imagination is defective.

¹³ On this point Billie Melman's study can be consulted *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Similar to that of Mrs Transome there are other negative images of the Orient in nineteenth-century British culture. For a detailed discussion on this subject see Barry Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains: Opium*

The other point about Harold's meeting his mother is that it recalls conflicting encounters in classical myths.¹⁵ Harold Transome's story bears some relation to the Oedipus myth in terms of the search for identity and the son's relationship to the nation.¹⁶ There are similarities, too, between the mother and the son both in Sophocles' and Eliot's stories. The mother-son relationship in both cases consists of untold stories, and a modification of the son's public role. Anthony Smith stresses the national identity of Oedipus in that the Oedipus story 'reveals the way in which the self is composed of multiple identities and roles – familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic and gender'.¹⁷ Oedipus' discovery of the individual self at the end is also an uncovering of his social self. This perception recalls Eliot's famous observation that in *Felix Holt* 'there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life', and it can be related to the national identity of Harold Transome (*FH*. p. 50).

In the Oedipal triangle of the novel, the father figure is depicted in paralysis. Harold, who left home because, as the second son he could not inherit the estate, comes back after his elder brother has died and his father has become less and less powerful. He has only had contact with his mother during his years of absence, and on his return, he is received only by the mother. Metaphorically Harold has already killed his father and his brother who was supposed to inherit the land, and comes home to replace his father. Mr

and the Orient in Nineteenth-Century British Culture (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

¹⁵ For the tragedy of Mrs Transome see F. C. Thomson, 'Felix Holt as Classical Tragedy', *Nineteenth-century Fiction*, 16 (1961-1962), 47-58.

¹⁶ Harold Transome's return home can be related to the Oedipus myth in the light of Anthony Smith's consideration of Sophocles' play, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).

¹⁷ Anthony Smith's theoretical approach can be employed in examining Eliot's perception of national identity, for he sets out the way in which traditions, a shared past, and religion reveal common features among members in a family, a province or a nation. If we take Smith's categories of determining national identity as he lists them in his *National Identity* as territorial, cultural, political, legal and economic forms of the community, we can see that Eliot's novel provides interconnection between these categories, p. 4.

Transome is presented as an 'imbecile' husband, something between a child and 'a timid animal' (*FH.* p. 15). Harold's meeting with Mr Transome takes only a couple of lines, and only serves to predict his own role in the public-sphere and his plans for the future. After Harold announces his Radicalism to his mother, she inwardly recalls a strong likeness to his real father Jermyn. Later in the novel, when the secret of Harold's paternity is revealed, his antagonism to his real father, Jermyn will be reinforced literally by their political rivalry. Harold is presented as a contrasting figure to both Mr Transome and Jermyn, as a result of his long-term experience of the foreign.

The short reference to Harold's visiting Mr Transome in his library can also be interpreted as representation of the shrinking communication between generations. It also emphasises the undermining of the power of the past, and of the upper class in the new age. Mr Transome has always been a weak man, but Harold's return reinforces his weakness. On the one hand, Harold's ambitious and powerful desire to change things 'under *my* reign' sharpens Mr Transome's passivity and lack of interest (*FH.* p. 21, original italics). On the other, it is only after seeing him that Harold both explains the coming of his little boy and announces his Radicalism. His careless and laconic answers to his mother from the moment he comes back become more significant when he replies to his mother: 'my man Dominic will bring him, with the rest of the luggage', after which he immediately proceeds to another subject which concerns him more: the coming elections (*FH.* p. 17). The relations between the father, son, and grandson are bound up with the contradictory features of continuity and Reform. What is more they foreshadow the future of England, as it will be gradually affected by the changing conditions with each generation. The identity of the English upper class is blurred by three generations of the Transomes: Mr Transome is described as imbecile, Harold as hybrid, and the only suggestion for the future is Harry with his mixed blood.

We never know Mr Transome's reactions to Harold, as he never speaks on this topic. Instead, Harold talks to his uncle in the second chapter, and, surprisingly, the Rector decides to back Harold's new political stance. The uncle is a kind of symbolical father figure and in so far as he also represents the public world, he, unlike other provincial people, enlarges the issue beyond the borders of provincial life and adopts a national perspective. A landed gentleman's transformation into a Radical is interpreted as a good sign by the uncle, who thinks that Harold is adapting to the changes of the modern world. His understanding of national identity combines the old customs and the new age in which Harold potentially has the power to play an important role. If the Radical movement is going to assume power, then it has to be led by the old Tories. The overall attitude of the uncle is still inspired by the dominant idea that the Tories represent Englishness. He backs Harold's candidacy on this assumption, and unlike the mother, ignores the fact that Harold has become something of a foreigner during his years abroad.

Harold's meeting with Jermyn throws important light on his perceptions of the home and the foreign. Their first meeting appears ironically to be in a common family setting. Their conversation, in a way, unites 'the divided' family, and throws into relief how different Harold has become. Jermyn metaphorically attempts to play a mediating role between the mother and the son, congratulating Mrs Transome for her son's coming home and turning towards Harold:

'[N]ow I have the pleasure of actually seeing your son. I am glad to perceive that an Eastern climate has not been unfavourable to him.'
 '[...T]he question is, whether *the English climate* will agree with me. It's deuced shifting and damp: and as for the food, it would be the finest thing in the world for *this country* if *the southern cooks would change their religion, get persecuted, and fly to England, as the old silk-wavers did.*'

‘There are plenty of foreign cooks for those who are rich enough to pay them, I suppose,’ said Mrs Transome, ‘but they are unpleasant people to have about one’s house’ (*FH*. p. 36-7, my italics).

The subject of the talk is carefully chosen, and implies the type of experience Harold had in the East. Harold reverses Jermyn’s derogatory suggestion that the climate abroad might have been harmful by implying that a better climate, better food and better cooks are to be found in the East. Harold moves from climate and geography to cultural values, emphasising the link between geographical distinctions, tastes and values. He playfully enlarges the issue by referring to the fact that his cook is ‘of no country in particular’, and may be a Jew, a Greek, an Italian, or a Spaniard as he is multi-lingual, and suggests importing southern cooks, and in doing so, he alludes to the ways in which foreign immigrants have enriched English culture. Harold’s defence of the East rather functions to criticise Englishness. His speech distances him from England and indicates his association with the outer world. Harold confidently emphasises his positive approach to the East in a compressed and rather flippant way. Mrs Transome’s reply is significantly bitter towards Harold and negative about foreign cooks. She again appears to define Englishness in terms of strict traditions, which for her ought not to incorporate foreign elements. She labels the foreign cooks ‘unpleasant people’, and the point is carefully and intentionally spelled out by Eliot. Upon Jermyn’s critical comment on Harold’s pretended connection with English politics, Harold replies that he was able to follow political developments of England and Europe when he was in Smyrna. Whereas in provincial England as Harold remarks critically, ‘[i]f a man goes to the East, people seem to think he gets turned into something like the one-eyed calendar in the “Arabian Nights”’ (*FH*. p. 39). Harold’s metaphor affirms that limited knowledge and imagination of ordinary English people induce them to misinterpret the other cultures of the world. Harold thus distinguishes himself from the majority of English people, and

asserts his superiority over both English and Oriental people, whereas Eliot intentionally draws him as ambiguous (and opportunist) in his evaluations of English and Oriental life.

Ambiguous Encounters

Harold

Harold's identity is paradoxical. Although the encounter with the foreign has already ended when Harold comes home at the beginning of the novel, the foreign enters English life in so far as Harold reflects it. He returns with different views from those of the conservative community in which he was brought up. Eliot carefully places him politically and culturally between categories. He is an Anglo-Oriental imperialist, both a political radical, and at the same time a member of the landed gentry. He is English, but also the only critic of English values in the novel. To trace the alterations in Harold's identity and his progress towards a complicated, though problematic synthesis, it is worth focussing on his ambiguities more closely.

Harold is subtly represented as divided between Englishness and foreignness. He brings new ideas to his homeland and plans to make changes in the domestic life as well as taking an active part in political life. Nevertheless Eliot qualifies Harold's attempts at employing his Eastern experience for the 'betterment' of his native society. Shifting between various view points, Eliot shows that he has different views from a pure Englishman of his age and status, but in the meantime, she does indicate that his wish to unsettle English life is not based on a broad understanding of cultural relativism. English life as represented by Mrs Transome and others is narrow, but Harold's intentions and actions are also ambivalent, selfish and not to be trusted. Most of the time

it seems that his encounter with the East has not enlarged him to change things for better, but he rather applies his power opportunistically wherever he is.

In one episode Harold's criticism of domestic matters is met by Mrs Transome's sarcastic evaluation that English life is static and not given to medical change like her son's views. Harold, by contrast, both affirms and resists his Englishness:

'[...] *I always meant to be an Englishman*, and thrash a lord or two who thrashed me at Eton.'

'I hardly thought you could have meant that, Harold, when I found you had married a foreign wife.'

'Would you have me wait for a consumptive lackadaisical Englishwoman who would have hung all her relations round my neck? I hate English wives; they want to give their opinion about everything. They interfere with a man's life. I shall not marry again' (*FH*. p. 20, my italics).

On the one hand, Harold's Englishness is carefully related to his private and self-centred concerns. On the other hand, Eliot explores Harold's exclusion of not only his mother but also women in general from the men's world. Moreover the distinction between Eastern and Western women is voiced by Harold himself, and it reveals the egoistic, masculine and despotic aspects of his personality. He noticeably behaves rather as if he is a coloniser: exercising power, ordering, re-organising, introducing new rules in a place which had its own conditions and an established way of life.¹⁸ Hence, his stress on Englishness is juxtaposed to his opportunistic Orientalism.

Harold's Orientalism, like his Englishness, is voiced by himself, again in relation to domestic and political matters at home. When Harold inquires after the reasons for the bad management of the estates, his mother defines them sarcastically as Toryism.

¹⁸ Alicia Carroll argues that he joined the ruling power: 'Transome's empire building involved slave owning and union with the Ottoman Empire, he is made an immoral figure with a past and future that is part of the English absorption in an East [...]', p. 245.

Harold ends the topic calmly, but carelessly as he always does, saying that 'a woman ought to be a Tory [...] I should hate a woman who took up my opinions, and talked for me. *I'm an Oriental, you know*' (FH. p. 108, my italics). Similar to his remarks about Englishness, Harold takes up Oriental views to exclude women from the masculine world. In comparing the above episodes, it becomes obvious that Harold's outlook on either Englishness or Orientalism is based on his egoistic desires rather than on a considered cultural relativism.

There are two more significant instances where Harold's identity is explored deeply and shown to be ambiguous; one is his relation to his son and the other is his attitude towards the Greek wife he had bought at Smyrna. The rules of inheritance in English life paradoxically determine Harold's connections with the foreign. Harold's reason for going to the East, we learn from Mrs Transome's memories was that, being the younger son and not the heir 'Harold must go and make a career for himself' (FH. p. 24). He goes to Constantinople to become a 'diplomatist', but ends up being 'a merchant and banker' at Smyrna.¹⁹ Similarly, he returns to England for reasons of inheritance, as his

¹⁹ Significantly enough, Eliot's letters and journals during her writing of this novel touch on the question of making a career abroad in relation to Lewes's sons. Unlike Harold, they were not potential heirs to a large estate but, like many young Englishmen, they were sent abroad to make a career in the colonies on the assumption that they would have better prospects there than at home. In her journal (22-23 July 1865), Eliot records news of Lewes' son Thornie who has gone to live in Natal: 'There has been a *monetary crisis in the Colony*, which has made his trading expedition of doubtful result. He [...] discourages the prospect of farming in Natal, so that we must think of Bertie's being a trader' (Journals, p. 125). Eliot's comments show that they had been considering sending the younger Lewes, Bertie, to Natal like his brother. In another letter in the same year, Eliot mentions Thornton's experience in Natal to François D'Albert-Durade stating that 'Thornton had some calamities to *encounter in Natal*, owing to a monetary crisis in the colony and a war with the natives. [...] These conditions in Natal cause us to waver in our intention of sending out the youngest who [...] is *better fitted for colonial life than for English life*, at least as far as the means of pushing his fortune are concerned. He is a fine fellow physically, [...] but he is not suited to any other life than that of a farmer, and in England farming has become a business that requires not only great capital but great skill to render it otherwise than hazardous' (Letters, V, p. 212, my italics). Colonial life is harsh unlike English life, but offers opportunities for those without capital or intellectual endowment. These letters reveal Eliot's indirect acquaintance with the nature of life in colonies. In a later letter she contrasts living conditions in England and in the colony, when she says of Bertie on his visit to Warwickshire that he is 'much pleased to see a country less black, and people a little less harsh than he has been used to in Scotland. Yet Scotland was a better preparation for *roughing it in a colony*' (Letters, IV, p. 233). There are some significant points in Eliot's remarks. Firstly, His character as a young and

elder brother has died and left him the heir. Moreover, what Harold imported from the East is not only his wealth and political Radicalism, but also his little son Harry, who ironically is to be the heir of the English estate. Both Eliot's portrayal of the child and the remarks of the other people present him in relation to Harold's 'contaminated' perspectives, as 'a metaphor for his father's 'low' heritage and political radicalism'.²⁰ The child represents Harold's colonialist practices, and raises crucial questions for the future of the Transome Court and England. On another level, though, this paradoxical heirship implies the decline of the aristocracy in England. Eliot introduces foreign blood into the English aristocracy, and by doing so she both sharpens her criticism of British colonialism, and also starts a series of figures to be repeated in the novels to come: characters with mixed blood.²¹

Eliot brings the idea of race into the novel by presenting this 'black-maned little boy' as an antithesis to Transome Court. At the beginning of the novel, when Harold is interrogated by the mother about the little son, he carelessly replies that 'O, I left him behind in town [...] with the rest of the luggage' (*FH*. p. 18). Harold's careless reply shows his attitude towards his little son, and reveals his lack of interest (and love) for the child. He presents his little son as a part of his 'luggage' – almost a half-slave – and in this sense, his colonial outlook is indicated, and throughout the novel his attitude

possibly loving boy, who comes back as a careless egoist might be due to 'roughing' it in the conditions he had experienced in the East. Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, Eliot is clearly aware of the problematic nature of colonial existence from Thornie's letters, yet does not seem sceptical about the idea of 'the colony' or even 'a war with the natives'. It can be interpreted that some features of colonialism have been internalised by Eliot, as she appears to be expressing conventional views of colonial life unquestioningly. The natives in Natal are seen as the 'other' and the colonial territory as an empty space, which can afford a vocation to the young Lewes. Similarly even Scotland is regarded as in some sense the other to England, and thus can prepare Bertie for the colony better than any English environment can do.

²⁰ Alicia Carroll, p. 247.

²¹ Mixed race is extended in *Middlemarch* with Ladislav and in *Daniel Deronda* with Deronda and Klesmer, who are to share an English heritage and play domestic and public roles for the future.

towards his son reaffirms this initial attitude.²² Moreover, the way he chooses to travel back home is considered to be 'Oriental' by the mother since, unlike an English gentleman, he travels alone in a post coach without his servants or baggage.

In addition to Harold's dismissive attitude, the provincial view of little Harry defines him as a 'wild animal'. Significantly, little Harry first appears during the critical visit of Sir Maximus and his wife, and he seems strange in the context of the English estate both for his appearance and his behaviour. Despite his English name, he seems to be a beast from the East; he cannot speak; only creates noise and bites, as though he were a savage creature.²³ He clearly does not like Mrs Transome, the representative of Englishness, whereas he has been fascinated by old Mr Transome and Esther. It is understandable that the imbecile Mr Transome, associated with animal images from the beginning, gets on well with his Eastern grandson. Esther's privileged position in Harry's world is more interesting as he is shown 'climbing up to her', 'snatching her curls with his brown fist', 'like the monkeys' (*FH*. pp. 377-378). The narrator describes him as 'this creature, with the soft broad brown cheeks, low forehead, great black eyes, tiny well-defined nose, fierce biting tricks', and this vocabulary clearly defines him as an animal, petted and cared by 'a new sort of bird' (*FH*. pp. 377). Esther is hence set among the animal figures, and communicates with them better than any other character. Harold's story with its Eastern extensions is thus interwoven with Esther's, which has its own foreign dimension.

²² Alicia Carroll points out that Harold is portrayed as '[t]he slave-owning imperialist who calls himself an 'Oriental' [and] represents the British potential for tyranny. Carroll also argues that 'at home in the Midlands, in an English society dominated by philistinism, it is the landed native who is a barbarian'. p. 238. Carolyn Lesjak, however says that 'Harold is figured more as an adventurer than a colonist or imperial administrator', p. 92.

Esther

In contrast to Harold's trans-cultural experience, Esther is shown undergoing an internal progression. Her only journey is from Mr Lyon's parsonage to Transome Court and this experience throws light on the issue of cultural relativism. Important concepts such as inheritance, race and nationality are questioned and problematized through Esther's relation to female figures as well as to her Radical suitors, Felix and Harold. Esther lives with her dissenter father, Mr Lyon, and her metaphorical encounter with her mother occurs when the secret of her family background is revealed. This changes her prospects as she learns the truth about her foreign origins.²⁴ With Mr Lyon's confession of the truth, the narrator reveals that Esther's 'mind seemed suddenly *enlarged* by a vision of passion and struggle, of delight and renunciation' (*FH*. p. 252, my italics). This is an awakening process on its own as it brings new aspects to Esther's life, relating her coincidentally to the other part of the plot. Esther is told that she stands to inherit Transome Court, and goes to live there for a trial period.²⁵ In this phase she is shown to have parallels with and differences from the other principal female figure, Mrs Transome. Esther is tolerant, and that tolerance is strikingly absent in Mrs Transome, the female representative of the older generation of Englishness. This suggests symbolically that England will embrace different groups and races in the future, since Esther represents a new sort of Englishness. Individually Esther's life has the potential to be better and happier than Mrs Transome's, which has been a tragic one.

²³ For the discussion on language of savagery see Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounter: Europe and the Native Caribbean* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

²⁴ The moment when Mr Lyon discovers a young woman on the way back from his preaching is described in a similar way to Deronda's finding of Mirah on the riverbank. Both young women, Mirah and Annette, are introduced by their sweet voice with 'strong foreign accents'. Annette, a woman of 'considerable rank' in France, had escaped to England to find her English husband. It is on learning of his death that she meets Mr Lyon and is rescued by him.

²⁵ George Eliot is criticized for the over complicated details of inheritance in this novel. I am going to examine this issue only briefly, as far as it is concerned with my argument.

Another female figure, Harold's slave-wife, even though she is left dead in Smyrna, introduces the idea of racial difference into the novel, and she is unintentionally involved in the English heritage system through her little son Harry. Esther refuses to marry Harold and thus avoids becoming the mistress of Transome Court and the step-mother of little Harry. In a sense, by separating Esther from Harold Eliot avoids creating a new Jane Eyre, who would share the wealth that has come from a suspect foreign source, as she has already avoided creating a possible Bertha Mason, by not allowing Harold's wife to live long enough to return to England with him.

Significantly, Harold's experience in the East plays a determining influence in Esther's decision, and separates the two parts of the plot, rather than uniting them textually and metaphorically. She is proposed to by Harold, who although he has stressed his dislike of English wives at the beginning, cannot curb his opportunistic desires. Harold's effort to prove to Esther that she is superior to any woman, particularly to his ex-wife, irritates her rather than impressing her.²⁶ 'Harry's mother had been a slave – was bought, in fact' (*FH*. p. 421): Harold's blunt revelation of his wife's identity is expressed in a way which distances him from the whole situation, while distinctly alarming Esther. The information is given in a passive sentence, which tends to play down his own responsibility and emphasise his indifference to others around him. He talks about his wife as the mother of Harry rather than as his wife, announcing casually that she was a slave who had been bought as though it were an insignificant detail. What his passive sentence implies is also that he had no responsibility for this commercial transaction, and had only experienced a routine and common way of life in the Eastern culture. His words, in this sense, give a clue to his life style in Smyrna and they also suggest that

Greek women are bought and sold as slaves regardless of Harold's particular interference. These kind of typical images are, however, repeatedly problematized by Eliot in the novel, as she stresses Harold's ambiguous identity and moral status.

Esther's internal 'journey' ends with her rejection of both the estate and Harold. On the night when Harold proposes to her, she stays awake, and turns to nature to help clarify her decision.

She drew up her blinds, liking to see the grey sky, where there were some veiled glimmerings of the moonlight, and the lines of the forever running river, and the bending movement of the black trees. She wanted *the largeness of the world to help her thought* (FH. p. 464, my italics).

Indeed, 'the largeness of the world' helps her to recall her meeting Felix six months previously. She re-evaluates her position, questions her possible inheritance and awakens to a new way of life. Esther rejects the inheritance offered to her as Eppie did in *Silas Marner* and Dorothea will do at the end of *Middlemarch*. She has another similarity with Dorothea in that they both stay awake during their crucial decision making, and they both conclude the night by choosing the wider prospects with the help of Nature. Some critics interpret Esther's end in terms of broad issues of culture; for example, Ruth Yeazell argues that this ending reassures us of the essential stability of things.²⁷ Alice Carroll finds parallels between Esther's decision and Maggie Tulliver's, in that she 'curtails her own ability to experience pleasure or freedom with an exotic outsider [...] embracing the very English Felix Holt'.²⁸ In this sense it can be said that by doing so, Esther avoids a 'spoiled' future as she is saved from marrying Harold who

²⁶ Beryl Gray suggests that this confession by Harold quickens Esther's 'sense of the superiority of Felix's "cultured nature", and helps conquer her desire for rank'. 'The Power of Provincial Culture: *Felix Holt*', *GE-GHLS*, 24-25 (1993), 17-35, (p. 28).

²⁷ Ruth Bernard Yeazell, 'Why Political Novels Have Heroines: *Sybil*, *Mary Barton*, and *Felix Holt*', *Novel*, (1984-85) 18, 126-144, (p. 140). Alan W. Bellringer argues that Esther 'slowly alters from being a

is contaminated by Eastern culture and uncontrolled by English perceptions. Nevertheless, I would argue that there is not a simple answer to the ending which, like the rest of the novel, reinforces ambiguity. Harold's decline is not simply based on his Oriental experience, but rather on a combination of this with his egoism and opportunism.

On another level, Felix, an anti-Byronic Radical, influences Esther's view more than Harold's quasi-Byronism could ever do.²⁹ Esther's original view of Harold is coloured by the Byronic associations his story in the East has for her, and the Byronic image she has of him is then undermined by the reality of his past behaviour. In her ladylike education Esther had learned to admire Byron's Romantic-exotic tales, and on her first meeting with Felix her admiration for Byron is made conspicuous. It is Felix, who opens the path to Esther's knowing her self and who questions Byron's reliability: "Byron's Poems!" he said, in a tone of disgust, while Esther was recovering all the other articles [...] What do you stuff your memory with Byron, Miss Lyon?" (*FH*. p. 69). In getting to know Felix Esther is, indeed, alerted to an awareness of class, gender and nation.

There are certain points worth examining in Eliot's use of Byronic material in this particular novel. Byron's romantic Eastern Tales indirectly influenced the cultural and political thoughts of several generations not only in England but also in Continental Europe. He travelled and lived in self-exile on the Continent. Eliot states in her letters and journals that she has read Byron admiringly, particularly for his rebellious

socially ambitious "prim Miss" [...] to being the later "rather wise" woman', (p. 103). *George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

²⁸ Alicia Carroll, p. 255.

character. She admired Byron until the news of his incestuous relationship with his half-sister was made public, which occurred much later than the publication of *Felix Holt*. However she uses Byronic images and figures in this novel in an ironic and in a controversial way.

Eliot's Harold has similarities both with *Childe Harold* and with Byron himself. Among some biographical similarities between Harold Transome and Byron, the mother figure seems to be worth noting. Both young English aristocrats, no matter that they went to the East for different reasons, keep up contact only with their mothers at home.³⁰ Like Byron, Harold writes only to his mother, though rather asking for information than telling of his life. Shortly after Byron's return to England, his mother fell gravely ill and died before he could reach her, so that there is no actual mother-son encounter in Byron's life. Harold's crucial meeting with his mother could be read as a fictional form of what might have happened, but did not happen, in Byron's life.

Eliot's treatment of Byron reproves the stereotypical Oriental elements in his writings. Harold Transome's name recalls that of the hero of Byron's *Childe Harold* in which Byron gives an account of his travels. '*Childe Harold* himself (the word "Childe" suggests his aristocratic status) is a dissolute, satiated and melancholy peer, a young man in need of the spiritual refreshment a pilgrimage might provide'.³¹ As Byron's critics suggest, *Childe Harold* reflects the search for political freedom and national identity. Byron introduced the image of the Greek slave woman to dramatise the crisis

²⁹ Felix's radicalism is also criticized in that his actions are 'on a very small scale, confined to watch-making and private tutoring', Alan W. Bellringer, p. 102.

³⁰ For biographical evidence of Byron see Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols, (New York: Knopf, 1957, London: John Murray, 1958).

³¹ Stephen Coote, *Byron: The Making of a Myth*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1988), (p. 25).

of liberation.³² Crucially, Greek classical ideals of democracy are recalled '[u]sing the image of 'barbaric' imperialist Turks', who enslaved advanced Greek culture.³³ I argue that Eliot unsettles the image Byron established with his *Eastern Tales* based on his own travels by making her Harold obviously not an 'idealistic' Byronic hero, but an opportunistic young man who buys a Greek slave for whose liberation Byron gave his life. Despotism and sexual tyranny, which are seen as the defining characteristics of the eastern culture and religion, seem to be practised by Harold himself, and, in this sense, he can be seen to represent imperial English power, united with the 'dominant' power in the East. Eliot portrays Harold Transome as materialist, opportunist and selfish, and almost a parody of Byron and his political ideals. Harold is not an idealist working to save others; instead, he is self-centred and opportunistic. The mixture of different cultures – and races – is highly valued by Eliot, and yet problematized in Harold's Anglo-oriental identity, which serves his self-interest rather than enlarging his understanding of others. Unlike Byron, who died for the independence of Greece, Harold's politics are aimed at improving England so far as his self-interest is concerned.

Images of the East

Felix Holt contains the first substantial references to the East in Eliot's work and thus differs from her earlier novels which mainly presented the foreign in terms of European or sometimes colonial life. The place chosen for Harold's adventures and for his wealth is Smyrna, a former Greek, yet now an Ottoman town, and it is left undescribed, although other foreign elements are carried into English life. The East is left untold; no

³² For the Greek elements in Byron see Timothy Webb, ed., *English Romantic Hellenism 1700-1824* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982) and also William St Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

person from the East is given a voice, and even talked about in Harold's recollections. Eliot steers clear of dealing with Oriental people and social life, and it is worth considering this point more closely to determine whether Eliot's attitude to the East is different from her attitude to the West.

The details of Harold's encounter with the East, its people, and its culture, are not known. His fifteen years in the East are recalled by the narrator in a single page, which reveals strikingly little about his experiences in Smyrna. All these details are collected by and given through his mother's recollection of the letters she received from him. Using the mother, who makes an absolute distinction between the national self and the foreigner, Eliot increases the ambiguity about Harold's experience in the East, because the mother's opinions of the East are all mixed up with her strong feelings for her favourite son. In other words, Harold's experience in the East is imagined and introduced by the mother, whose approach to the East is a typically provincial one. It is, therefore, not clear whether, had he stayed at home, he would have been as selfish as he is now. It is indicated, though, that he is selfish by birth as Mrs Transome physically likens him to Jermyn, who considers his own interests before anything else; and towards the end of the novel complains that all men, at least the ones she loved, are 'selfish and cruel' (*FH*. p. 470). Nevertheless, provincial minds, voiced by Sir Maximus, ^{think} ~~resemble~~ Harold has turned into some sort of a 'beast' in the East, and indeed his attitude towards people around him such as his mother, Esther, Harry, and his ex-wife, as I have tried to show in the former sections, indicate this.

³³ Alicia Carroll argues that both Byron and George Eliot follow a western tradition established in the eighteenth century, p. 251.

Eliot reveals different levels of knowledge of the East in English culture. Most of the time she criticises the stereotypical reactions of English people to the foreign. The East is presented in an ambivalent light in order to raise questions about the limited perception of other cultures, places and religions that characterises English provincial life. This ambiguous attitude towards the East and her complicated approach distinguish Eliot from other English nineteenth-century novelists and from Said's *Orientalist* in that she tends to challenge the dominant perceptions of the other. For Said, especially after the post-Enlightenment period, limited knowledge and unconscious images in western minds influenced their interpretation of the East. The Orient is defined by the European Orientalists as 'a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences'.³⁴ The East is imagined by Western intellectuals, artists, and novelists, as a recurring image of the other. Orientalism is then, 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.³⁵ For Eliot, unlike Said's *Orientalists*, cultural identity is not static; it can change, be in conflict, and undergo enlargement. She creates mixed human beings, and calls for tolerance towards those who are different from the majority. Indeed, Eliot does not reproduce but rather challenges what Said's *Orientalists* have been doing. Understandably, she had had no direct experience of the East but she carefully avoided presenting a false image of it.

Even when she appears to give expression to Eurocentric prejudices, she still continues to qualify and question them. There is, for instance, an unconscious construction of vocabulary in Eliot's references to the East. Mahommedanism, for example, is used both by Mrs Transome and by Mr Maximus in their negative reactions to Harold's changed identity. From the Western point of view, it was assumed that 'Mohammed

³⁴ E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3.

was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity. Hence, the polemical name “Mohammedanism” was given to Islam and the automatic epithet “imposter” applied to Mohammed’.³⁶ The term is significantly of Western origin, and does not accurately cover the religion Islam. Said, in this sense, is right to point out the stereotypical images the West attributes to Islam as a part of the East, sharing in its mystery, exoticism, corruption, and latent power. Mrs Transome’s instant analogy between Harold’s becoming a Radical and a conversion to Islam underpins the prevailing mythical and imaginary concepts of the other in terms of its culture and religion. Mrs Transome’s reaction is coloured by her fear of the East as a kind of religio-cultural challenge, and it amounts to a dismissive evaluation of an inferior culture. However, this stereotypical opinion is problematised by Eliot later in the novel, when Harold confesses to Esther that he himself bought a Greek slave to be his wife. The alien practices of a foreign culture turn out to be nearer to home than Mrs Transome had imagined. This idea recalls the unveiling of the real thief of Silas’s gold in *Silas Marner*: despite the common estimation that it is a foreign pedlar, it turns out to be the brother of Godfrey Cass, the local landowner. In this example the negative image of the thief and in *Felix Holt* the despotic action of Harold highlight the idea that the negative values attributed to the foreign are false. Contrastingly, despotic power is used by the English Aristocrat, Harold to show that English life and figures also have negative features, and Eliot presents this subtly by stressing his ambiguity throughout the novel. He is both enlightened and prejudiced, radical and conservative, generous and self-centred, refreshingly different and yet in many ways a thoroughly conventional member of the landed gentry.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 60.

The provincial assessments of Harold reveal the stereotypical images that hold sway in provincial minds. Sir Maximus and his wife, the major provincial figures, are outraged when they hear of Harold's changed politics. They assume that 'he has become a regular beast among those Mahometan – he's got neither religion nor morals left. He can't know anything about English politics' (*FH*. p. 97). As Alicia Carroll has pointed out 'the English aristocrats perceive Harold as an Oriental usurper,'³⁷ whereas 'Eliot's narrator critically identifies his character with English imperialism'.³⁸ In my view, the narrow perspectives of English life are criticised by Harold's radical ideas gained in the East. Hence, cultural relativism is potentially suggested by Harold's different views, even though they remain ambiguous and opportunistic.

Conclusion

The novel concludes on a note of ambiguity about the impact of Harold's encounter. After he learns the identity of his true father he 'wished he had never come back to this pale English sunshine' (*FH*. p. 457). It also recalls Eliot's own experience after she returned from Geneva, and was not welcomed by her family. The mother and son are confronted under the changed 'English' circumstances, which reveal different feelings from their first meeting at the beginning of the novel. Now Harold has undergone the bitter experience of discovering his hidden roots. We do not know what will happen when Harry grows up, but his father with his pseudo-Orientalism does not prosper. Harold's Radicalism does visible good neither to himself personally nor to his community or nation politically; it problematizes both his domestic and his public roles.

³⁷ Alicia Carroll, p. 247.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 247.

Felix Holt extends Eliot's positive understanding of, and questioning approach to the cultural other. Harold Transome's individual experience involves significant references to his national identity. England is for the first time in Eliot's fiction subjected to the imperial gaze of an Englishman, when Harold returns, in a sense, to use his Anglo-Oriental power in England. The interaction between the two is seen through the eyes of Harold, whose identity is ambivalent. He is unique among Eliot's characters as he has this capacity of shifting between different perspectives. Nevertheless, in spite of all his ambivalence Harold stands as one of the sharpest critiques of English life among Eliot's characters.

In my view, uncertainties are foregrounded at the end of the novel. Eliot intentionally emphasises the ambiguous points of Harold's identity so that traditional English life can be questioned by someone who embodies both the self and the other. Harold has had the potential to change for the better and acquire enlarged horizons from his experiences, yet the outcome of his foreign adventure turns out to be problematic. But he also has other failings, as Eliot prefers her characters to be real in this combination of weakness and strength. There are not many references to his past, and similarly his future is left open-ended, and in the dramatic present of the novel he is depicted either through the subjective eyes of his mother, or through his own words and actions, both of which create uncertainty about his personality.

The class conflicts and politics in *Felix Holt* are enlarged and complicated through the marginal example of Harold Transome, who thus serves to widen the English vision a little. Eliot problematizes upper class views represented by Mrs Transome by transforming Harold into an Anglo-Oriental who stands as a Radical candidate, in contrast to his ancestral customs of his class. His meeting with his mother raises the

idea of detachment and foreignness from the beginning of the novel, and both sides of the plot are affected by it and it makes for a problematic ending. Mrs Transome has already met her own 'strange' son over whom she has no power, but she will also have a little grandson with mixed blood, and this can be seen as a metaphorical foreshadowing of English domestic and political life in the coming age. Eliot's approach is multi-layered, combining the English life of her novels with a form of foreignness, and most of the time the presentation of the foreign is complex. To quote Barbara Hardy, 'unlike other Victorian writers, Eliot's "long and assured development" of an interest in foreignness results less in sheer stereotyping than in an expression of her *fascination in the other*'.³⁹

In the light of this enduring fascination, Harold can be seen as an extension of the figure Eliot created with David in 'Brother Jacob', combining both subject and object. Harold's identity is portrayed in ^afor greater detail and his interactions are more clearly carried to national level than those of David who is always the object of mockery. The foreign experience of these two characters and their encounter with the new face of English life have parallels, yet David's narrowness, egoism and false imagination of the foreign are revealed and ridiculed from the beginning, whereas Harold's experience of foreign life remains untold and has to be deduced from his behaviour. The reactions of the provincial inhabitants to the newcomer's return to English life are typically similar, as they suspect both the physical and the moral alterations in the newcomer. This again recalls the idea of imperialism and its view of the East as an empty place where people of the superior power are expected to teach and dominate the inferior native inhabitants.

³⁹ Barbara Hardy, 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness', p. 9.

As Eliot's vision widens to include foreign experience, English life, too, presented in a richer and deeper fashion in the later novels, which deal with larger worlds and a greater variety of foreignness. Marginalized elements in English life replace the ordinary ones in the previous novels. The image of the other is never idealized, for it, too, has mixed features which make the encounter with Englishness ambiguous rather than one that leads to a simple resolution. The world becomes more complicated in the later novels, and one has to obtain wider horizons in order to comprehend it better. Eliot's treatment of the encounter with the foreign becomes increasingly complex and addresses issues of cultural, racial and national significance in a modernist sense.⁴⁰ This is part of a broader development in Eliot's fiction in which the idea of the foreign becomes progressively more important and more complex until in *Daniel Deronda*, it encompasses the whole novel.

⁴⁰ For further definition and discussion on national identity, see the landmark in its class Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Following Anderson's footsteps, Cannon Schmitt stresses the power of masculinity in the formation of national identity. *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

CHAPTER SIX

Middlemarch: 'Here – Now – in England'**Introduction**

As the sub-title of the novel itself suggests, *Middlemarch* is a study of the provincial life well known to Eliot from her childhood. It portrays various provincial figures such as the Chettams, the Cadwalladers and Mr Brooke, living in the country and representing the provincial gentry; the Vincys and the Bulstrodes living in the town and representing the prosperous middle-class. The Garths and the Farebrothers, who are from the less affluent margins of the middle class, present the positive side of provincial life, and are nostalgically evoked. In this broad coverage of provincial life, Eliot's organic construction of milieu clearly requires interaction between different layers of society; this was begun in *Silas Marner*, extended in *Felix Holt* and achieves its fullest realization in *Middlemarch*. The subject of this chapter, however, is Eliot's construction of the relations between provincial people and outsiders, because this novel of English life has significant and diverse references to the larger world, relating English life to foreign countries and foreign people.

The distinctive features of provincial life are challenged both by the general reforming impulse of the times and by the impact of the foreign. Eliot makes use of the foreign, both by bringing in the foreign oriented character Will Ladislaw and by sending her English characters Dorothea and Casaubon abroad, and in both cases the outcome is to question, and to enlarge provincial life. The foreign setting of Rome, unlike Smyrna in the previous novel, is described in detail and functions as a kind of studio where

foreignness is predominantly represented by Ladislav with his Polish origins and his German friend Naumann, and it serves to challenge the values of Englishness.¹

The primary critical connection between the foreign and the English worlds is the concept of education. English education is presented mostly as limiting personal and intellectual growth as in the cases of Fred, Rosamond and Casaubon. In the figure of Fred Vincy formal education is repeatedly revealed as a mistake (like Tom's in *The Mill on the Floss*), and there is an implied belief that an expensive university education system that simply tries to turn a manufacturer's son into a clergyman is entirely misplaced.² The alternatives to a college education that Fred himself envisages are presented as either risky, such as gambling and trading horses, or idle, such as waiting to inherit from Mr. Featherstone, and both are morally indefensible. His moral enlargement is presented solely in terms of the provincial milieu, and, at the end, he together with the Garths, stands for a positive type of provincial Englishness representing a synthesis of the classes rather than a yielding of one to another.

By contrast, foreign education offers a clear challenge to the traditional, classical education in England, and brings new and unusual ideas to the traditional, narrow life of Middlemarch. Three major characters: Dorothea, Lydgate and particularly Ladislav

¹ Barbara Hardy points out that 'Rome in *Middlemarch* is an opening for foreignness that stands for George Eliot's Europeanism and internationalism, and for Marian Evans's discontent with the English provincial Midlands', 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness', p. 1.

² Fred's class identity is marked by two aspects of the middle class represented by his two uncles. Mr Bulstrode is the banker of the town and as such is regarded as a speculator by Featherstone, who represents land. Land involves both nature and the larger world, which are juxtaposed to the narrow materialism of finance and commerce. Fred's eventual occupation embraces both land and commerce. Eliot reveals the web of communication between the different social classes, but she also identifies the sharp distinctions that Fred begins to discover. Fred is materialistic in his values and ambitions until he encounters the idealistic and wider prospects of the Garth family. When his selfish speculation causes trouble for the Garths, he becomes aware of the sharp difference between his own life and that of the Garths who, unlike him, need to work for money. The difference between the material and natural worlds highlights the larger world implied in life on the land. Fred is saved from being another Dunstan Cass or Durfey Transome.

have been educated partly or wholly abroad and appear to be outsiders^s in Middlemarch. In fact, the common predicament the three characters share is the difficulty of adjusting to life back in England. Lydgate with his superior scientific education in London, Edinburgh and Paris is trapped by the feminine world of Rosamond as much as by the provincial narrowness of Middlemarch. Dorothea similarly starts with illusions of attaining the kind of knowledge that is conventionally seen as the preserve of men, but soon faces the reality of the boundaries both of the feminine world and of the provincial world. The difficulties faced by the two characters both juxtapose the values of the provincial world with the world outside and subject the former to question.

Middlemarch is a town where provincial values and small-mindedness restrict the lives of its inhabitants.³ Throughout the novel, the values of provincial life are shown to be typically English so that Middlemarch is like a miniature version of the nation at large. This picture of England that emerges from the novel is a mixed one; it includes positive images of true Englishness in the figures of Farebrother and the Garths while at the same time revealing the constricting effect of patriarchal and class expectations. Characters who have tolerance and sympathy towards others such as Dorothea and the Garths are pictured positively, while narrow and restricted figures like Rosamond, Casaubon and the Chettams are criticised explicitly. Their contentment with the present conditions is displayed as a barrier to possible progress in society. It would, of course, be over-simplifying Eliot's complicated analysis to say that she presents the foreign as always better than the English does. Celia, for example, who has been educated abroad with Dorothea, seems to be content with her life back in Middlemarch. In a similar way

³ Catherine Neale in *George Eliot: Middlemarch* (London: Penguin, 1989) defines provincialism 'a complex term, denoting both small-mindedness and contentment', and it is characterised by a negative attitude towards the new, the unusual and the unknown, (p. 83).

the Garths, who represent the positive element in provincial Middlemarch, are presented as admirable in their Englishness.

Within this mixed map of provincial life, differences of gender, class and culture play a crucial role. The values of masculinity, of the middle and upper middle class, and of Englishness are dominant in Middlemarch society, while the values of 'femininity', of different classes and cultures are perceived as alien. The 'other' is presented as homogenous, stereotypical and mysterious with no acknowledgment of its individual, independent and familiar features. The patriarchal structure equates masculinity with 'the self' and femininity with 'the other', and this can be seen in the ideas of Mr Brooke, Casaubon, Sir James Chettam and even Lydgate. Mr Brooke provides one of the most striking examples, insisting that 'deep studies, classics, mathematics, that kind of thing, are too taxing for a woman [who] should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good old English tune' (*MM.* p. 65). Similarly Casaubon 'observed with pleasure that Miss Brooke showed an ardent submissive affection which promised to fulfil his most agreeable previsions of marriage' (*MM.* p. 63). The former suitor of Miss Brooke, Sir James Chettam represents the narrow aspects of the provincial world in other subjects as well as in his thoughts on women. He is always wanting Dorothea, a 'perfect horsewoman', to ride out with him in his imaginative role as her future husband and he also offers her a Maltese dog, differentiating the world of women from his own by saying: 'I should never keep them for myself, but ladies usually are fond of [them]' (*MM.* p. 30). This tendency to see the other sex as mysterious and uniformly the same can be observed even in Lydgate's attitude towards women. Although he is an outsider with a different educational background from the inhabitants of Middlemarch, he has 'spots of commonness, [which] lay in the complexion of his prejudices' – these prejudices involve acquiring the best for himself as regards women and furniture, a

conjunction which reduces the opposite sex to a kind of a domestic ornament (*MM.* p. 150).

The Patterns of Provincial Life

Eliot's most accomplished form of multi-plot novel is achieved in *Middlemarch* which presents the different worlds of Lydgate, who comes to the town with his idealistic medical reforms after completing his medical education in various places, London, Scotland and Paris, and Miss Brooke, who comes to experience the foreign in the course of the novel. Lydgate cutting his bonds with his high-born connections, tries to stand on his own feet while being 'altogether foreign to Middlemarch' (*MM.* p. 118). Eliot chooses to introduce him through the provincial comments on him as she does in her earlier novels, except for *Felix Holt* where Harold Transome is allowed to speak out his foreign opinions for himself. The collective attitude towards Lydgate and towards his profession is revealed before his plans and personality are exposed during his public appearance at Mr. Brooke's dinner party. Speculation and comment about him highlight his status as an outsider, and indicate public opinion on the subject of his profession, which is socially indeterminate in terms of rank at that period. Mr Brooke takes a positive view of Lydgate's opinions on reform, whereas Lady Chettam is more doubtful about the newcomer doctor and asks her son to 'bring Lydgate and introduce him' to her. Being one of the representatives of the dominant group in Middlemarch, she prefers 'to test him' on his profession before investing any trust in him (*MM.* p. 91).

More significantly, Lydgate's initial reception by some other members of provincial society is related to the idea of Englishness. Mr Standish, the conservative lawyer breaks out with his anxiety about Lydgate: "Hang it, do you think that is quite sound? - upsetting the old treatment, which has made *Englishman* what they are?" (*MM.* p. 92,

my italics). Mr Standish classifies the Englishman as a man respectful of tradition and with a marked sense of superiority, and the 'others' as lacking the combination of qualities which make the English superior. A typical provincial anxiety about the newcomer doctor and his relationship to Rosamond is presented in an everyday conversation between two provincial characters. Mrs Plymdale whose son cannot be a suitor for Rosamond confesses her worries about strangers in the town, while Mrs Bulstrode defends them on religious grounds:

'I should say I was not fond of strangers, coming into a town.'
'I don't know Selina,' says Mrs Bulstrode '[...] Mr Bulstrode was a stranger here at one time. Abraham and Moses were strangers in the land, and we are told to entertain strangers [...]' (*MM*. p. 295).

Loyalty to tradition as far as it is concerned with private benefits is considered a major quality of Englishness, and it is one that Lydgate is supposed to lack in provincial eyes.

In a similar way, Dr Sprague, the senior physician of the town, considers Lydgate to have 'a certain showiness as to foreign ideas, and a disposition to unsettle what had been settled and forgotten by his elders' (*MM*. p. 157). As the novel goes on, the narrator compares Lydgate's medical practices with that of the other doctors in Middlemarch: with his new methods and practices '[t]he newcomer already threatened to be a nuisance in the shape of rivalry' (*MM*. p. 452). Lydgate's different scientific approach as well as his being an outsider is seen as a threat to traditional ways of behaving. Lydgate not only annoys his conventional colleagues with his foreign methods of medical treatment, but also is repeatedly disconnected from Englishness in their eyes. Lydgate's scientific career is based on 'currents of European mind' and he thinks his provincial colleagues do not possess 'a scientific culture' (*MM*. p. 125). He believes that '[a]ny valid professional aims may often find a freer, if not a richer field, in the provinces' (*MM*. p. 129) and prefers working and living in the provinces to a

great city. He has great plans 'to do good small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world' (*MM.* p. 149). He means to exalt his profession and extend medical reforms.

Lydgate is scientifically in advance of Middlemarch doctors when he comes to the town and he is aware of this. He is enthusiastic about his career, about reforms in his field and about his prospect of doing social good.⁴ Significantly his ambition to 'contribute towards enlarging the scientific rational basis of his profession' (*MM.* p. 147) is mentioned in relation to the discovery of America. Unknown aspects of Pathology are likened to the newfound land which changed the history of the world. However, his idealistic ambitions are not easily adjusted to the materialistic and narrow conditions of the provincial town and the limited views of his wife. In this sense, it is significant that the Vincy and the Bulstrode families, who represent narrow, materialistic provincial values, have a crucial role in Lydgate's downfall, for both Rosamond and Bulstrode restrict Lydgate's horizons in his private and professional life.

On another level, though, Lydgate has his own narrowness. To his eyes the female remains a mysterious 'other'. His scientific gaze underestimates women, yet is trapped by their negative power.⁵ The combination of professional accomplishment and emotional failure had already been anticipated by his experience in Paris with the actress Laure, 'a Provençale, with dark eyes, [and] Greek profile' (*MM.* p. 151), who turned out to be the 'murderer' of her husband. Laura, who anticipates Alcharisi in

⁴ Gisela Argyle points out that Ladislav's 'scope is large enough; unlike Casaubon's, it is modern and European', p. 41.

⁵ In an earlier work by W. J. Harvey, Casaubon and Lydgate are compared in their 'seeking for a key' and 'trying to resolve diversity and plurality into a basic unity'. Both blind points in their personality, having a masculine approach to science, and both end up as 'failures', (p. 35). 'The Intellectual Background of

Daniel Deronda with her independence and coldness, questions cultural expectations when she refuses him. She classifies Lydgate by his nationality, asking: 'are all Englishmen like this?' (*MM.* p. 152). This episode, in which his infatuation blinds him to the fact that the actress has murdered her husband, is a critical encounter with foreign life and with the 'otherness' of a passionate and ruthless woman, but it is one from which ironically he fails to learn. Although he educates himself medically in Paris, he remains emotionally uninstructed by his experience. His encounter with the foreign in his private life is thus a painful and unproductive one.

Back in provincial life, Lydgate's expectations of women remains narrow, selfish and in this sense entirely conventional. He finds, for example, Dorothea's eagerness and interest in the public world troublesome and not 'from the proper feminine angle', and in a similar way he ignores Mary Garth. He feels that 'if ever he married, his wife would have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys' (*MM.* p. 164). He locates men and women in totally different worlds with different languages, and emphasises women's tenderness as against men's brutality.⁶ This conventional view of gender differences contrasts sharply with his intellectual enlightenment as a scientist and it proves disastrous for his career when he encounters the provincial female Rosamond, who eventually restricts his masculine scientific ambition to do good for the world.⁷

the Novel: Casaubon and Lydgate', in *Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1967), pp. 25-37.

⁶ These images differentiate the worlds of men and women. As Daniel Karlin shows in his 'Having the Whip-Hand in *Middlemarch*', in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Alice Jenkins, John Jilet (New York: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 29-43, there are other images and physical gestures, for example 'whip handing', which anticipates that 'power is to be an issue in Lydgate's relationship to Rosamond', (p. 29).

⁷ Carol A. Martin, sees Rosamond as a study in the destructive effects of the woman on the man who has chosen her to be his idol, (p. 23). 'George Eliot: A Feminist Critic' *The Victorian Newsletter* 65 (1984), 22-25.

Although Rosamond is considered a model young woman by her provincial community, the narrator highlights her artificiality and narrowness, criticising her narrow education in particular. She has her own fantasies, dreaming of Lydgate as the ideal suitor. Ironically, Rosamond, whose caprices are seen in terms of narrow provincialism, is attracted by the very fact that he is a stranger in Middlemarch:

[A] stranger was absolutely necessary to Rosamond's social romance, which had always turned on a lover and bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own [...] and here was Mr Lydgate being altogether foreign to Middlemarch [...] (*MM.* p. 118).

Rosamond though truly 'provincial', is strongly aware of the social disadvantages of living in the provinces. The stranger she wants as a husband is targeted for his high birth and connections, not for his potential breadth of character and uniqueness. Lydgate is qualified as a suitor precisely because his social status promises to transport her into the world of romance she encountered at school. The common motive for marriage among middle class young women – a desire to rise in society – is criticised as much as Rosamond's education at Mrs Lemon's School.

The narrator ironically suggests that both Lydgate and Rosamond are alien to each other's worlds: 'Poor Lydgate! Or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing' (*MM.* p. 165). But in this case, the encounter with a form of foreignness leads not to higher understanding of the other but to permanent misunderstanding and despair. Soon after the marriage she fails to support her husband's scientific work, and her bird-like femininity is far from satisfying Lydgate's ambitious and idealistic plans; but conversely his intellectual ambitions and disdain for his own family background make him impatient with her values and limited horizons.

The otherness, which initially attracts them to each other, turns out to be the mark of a fundamental incompatibility.

Lydgate's encounter with provincial life and his marriage to a provincial wife are painful and narrowing. His ambition to exalt his profession is transformed into the agony of satisfying Rosamond's materialistic desires. An episode towards the end of the novel highlights Lydgate's eventual narrowed perception as a result of his marital problems. Lydgate is described playing billiards for money intently in the Green Dragon:

[...] Lydgate, who had habitually an air of self-possessed strength, and a certain meditateness that seemed to lie behind his most observant attention, was acting, watching, speaking with that *excited narrow consciousness* which reminds one of an animal with fierce eyes and retractile claws. [...] his mind was utterly *narrowed* into that precipitous crevice of play as if he had been *the most ignorant* loungeur there (*MM.* p. 672, my italics).

The repetitive nature of narrow, monotonous action has been criticized before in Silas Marner's materialistic narrowness during his insect-like action of weaving. In *Daniel Deronda*, similarly, gambling and its monotonous sameness are critically displayed in the opening scene. As the episode in the Green Dragon ominously foreshadows, Lydgate's ambitious plans are never fulfilled and he is narrowed down to the life of a fashionable doctor, alternating between London and a Continental bathing-place and using his medical knowledge to serve the rich. In his case Metropolitan and Continental scenes of his later life indicate his failure rather than his broad plans. His marginal medical practices are assimilated in a sadly conventional career, and normalized by the narrow perspective of his basil plant, Rosamond.

Problematic Contact with the Foreign

Dorothea's story illustrates the positive benefit that can come from an encounter with the foreign. She is defined as 'unusual', marginal and 'other' for her feminine intellectual aspirations in the patriarchal social structure. She encounters the other sex through her marriage and another class in her search for a vocation, while her national identity is confronted by the foreign in her travel abroad. Her emotional and national perceptions are blurred in Rome, where she experiences the foreign not only through the cultural difference of the Catholic capital city, but also through Ladislaw's difference both from typical English norms and from Casaubon's measured emotions.

The novel starts and ends with the question of Dorothea's role and fulfilment in society. In the Prelude, rather as in *The Mill on the Floss*, a possible role for Dorothea in life is suggested by the narrator's allusion to Saint Theresa. It is a role that is associated with a national life and a heroic confrontation with a foreign culture.

Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt [...] on the life of Saint Theresa, has not smiled with some gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking hand-in hand with her still small brother to go and seek martyrdom *in the country of the Moors*? Out they toddled from rugged Avilia, wide-eyed and helpless-looking as two fawns, but with human hearts, already beating to *a national idea*; until domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles, and turned them back from their great resolve (*MM*. p. 3, my italics).

This episode brings the idea of nationalism and women together.⁸ Women are associated with national views in the earlier novels: first Caterina in 'Mr Gilfil's Love Story', then Mrs Transome, Esther and Harold's Greek wife in *Felix Holt* who are more developed

⁸ Gisela Argyle suggests that in this novel Eliot 'promises a widening of a different aspect of life, the 'social lot of women', p. 40. Indeed both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* suggests new horizons for women, social and national roles. Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, and Gwendolen, Mirah and Alcharisi in

figures in this respect. In *Middlemarch*, the possibility is raised that Dorothea might achieve given a more definite role in relation to the nation. The experience women have in history is recalled by the narrator in terms of patriarchy which has restricted women to domestic roles. Dorothea as a possible Theresa in the Midlands, is inspired by the foreign Saint, who is chosen as an example to highlight the idea that the Epic life cannot be assumed for later born Theresas.⁹ There is perhaps a hint in the Prelude that Dorothea might aspire to a national role by uniting the public and private spheres.

She certainly attempts to escape from the provincial, narrow views of those around her. In this sense, she is contrasted with other female characters in the novel, such as her sister Celia, Rosamond Vincy and Mrs Cadwallader. The latter provides another example of commonly held views of the foreign with her opinion that 'it is nonsense, people going a long journey when they are married [...] they get tired to death of each other, and can't quarrel comfortably, as they would at home' (*MM*, p. 277). This pronouncement is relayed by Celia when she asks Dorothea's opinion about making a 'long journey' for her honeymoon after Dorothea's return from her own honeymoon journey to Rome. It is a doubly significant and ironical moment, since it conveys the opinions of the female community on the one hand and reminds us of Dorothea's unhappy honeymoon on the other. Celia also adds that Mrs Chettam had gone to Bath on her honeymoon and implies that she, too, will spend her honeymoon somewhere in the neighbourhood. The timing of Celia's speech is crucial, coming as it does just after Dorothea's unhappy honeymoon, and it reveals that Celia, by contrast, will simply be

Daniel Deronda are ascribed with different forms of extended roles beyond participation to domestic and provincial matters.

⁹ Some critics like Ellin Ringler, name this situation the Saint Theresa Syndrome: 'the female fate – of desiring an epic life but finding no outlet for achievement apart from the socially limiting role of "common womanhood", i.e. marriage', '*Middlemarch: A Feminist Perspective*', *Studies in the Novel*, 15:1 (1983), 55-59, (p. 57).

happy by repeating what she has learned from female society and doing what other women do. Dorothea cuts herself off from her maternal past and, is portrayed as 'perpetually battling against limitations in her education, [...] insisting on a wider focus for her energies' while Celia enjoys the typical young lady's life.¹⁰

Dorothea's hunger for knowledge is interlinked with her desire for marriage from the beginning of the novel. The subjectivity of provincial minds is clearly set against the 'other', and related to Dorothea's outlook, which reveals both her differences from other people, and at the same time her shortsightedness. Her large eyes symbolize her vision and seemed 'too unusual and striking' to the provincial community in which '[s]ane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them' (*MM.* p. 9).¹¹ The passage from which this quotation is taken starts with the idea that Dorothea's 'otherness' from the sane majority may influence her marriage prospects in this provincial world, where women were expected to have weak opinions follow what previous generations have done. Dorothea's 'love of extremes' is set against the uniformity favoured by provincial society, where she is considered unusual with her different outlook and capacity to unsettle established conventions.

The national image suggested in the Prelude reappears at crucial points in Dorothea's life. When she first meets Casaubon at Tipton Grange, she imagines him to be a great scholar like Locke, Milton or Pascal. In her decision to accept Casaubon's proposal for

¹⁰ Terence R. Wright, *George Eliot's Middlemarch*, (New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp.154-76, (p. 175). In terms of education both sisters have had similar experiences, 'since they were about twelve years old and had lost their parents, on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne', (*MM.* p. 8). Clearly, their education aims at preparing them for their future feminine roles. However, this kind of education, with its 'toy-box history', does not suit Dorothea in her search for larger horizons.

marriage national qualities play a significant role. He acquires a higher status in Dorothea's eyes for being 'as different as possible' from the standard young English man. She observes:

His manners [...] were dignified; the set of his iron-grey hair and his deep eye-sockets made him resemble the portrait of Locke. He had the spare form and the pale complexion, which became a student; *as different as possible* from the blooming *English* man of red-whiskered type represented by Sir James Chettam (*MM*. p. 16, my italics).

Casaubon with his 'pale complexion' appears to be a world-renowned scholar and represents universal knowledge for Dorothea, whose ardent desires are not satisfied by the 'blooming' and provincial Sir James. Dorothea's hunger for a universal role and for masculine knowledge drives her towards Casaubon rather than to Sir James, and that is at the same time a movement towards a wider world than her present one. Dorothea turns her face to the world of men and believes that marriage could open the doors of 'large yet definite duties'. She supposes that: 'the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew if you wished it' (*MM*. p. 10). Casaubon seems to her to be a figure who, as a historian, links the past of patriarchal knowledge with current problems: 'Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly' (*MM*. p. 64).

Nevertheless, Dorothea and Casaubon represent the different status of men and women in the history of knowledge, where women have only an unheroic history.¹²

It would be like marrying Pascal. I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to

¹¹ This idea of reinforced sameness can also be seen as the normalising power of society in relation to the differences that Foucault reflects.

¹² Barbara Hardy's point in 'Middlemarch: Private and Public Worlds', *English*, 15 (1976), 5-26, that Eliot 'displac[es] history not simply to present it with subtlety but to insist that private relationships and interests drive out the larger happening', (p. 14).

do, when I got older: I should see how it was possible to lead a grand life *here-now-in England*. I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now: everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know [...] (MM. p. 29).

Dorothea wants to understand the past in order to find out how to live in the present. She aspires to a national role within the limitations prescribed by her domestic conditions. Dorothea's potential role in England is ironically qualified firstly by the instant arrival of Sir James Chettam, the representative of provincialism, who disrupts this meditation on the future; and later metaphorically when 'domestic reality' meets her in the shape of Casaubon. While Dorothea imagines that through her marriage to Casaubon she would be able to 'see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it', that light never reaches her. Marriage to the man with great knowledge locks the door instead of opening it with the 'key' to another sphere. This image of light will be repeated in Rome, when her vision blurs with the strain of adjusting to the new setting.

On another level, Dorothea's remarks about ~~of~~ Englishness and a people whose language she does not know are not separate from the invisible notions of a culture of imperialism. The very analogy she uses betrays the influence of the dominant culture where cultural artefacts of imperialism are conspicuous. Another example is when she flirtatiously replies to Ladislav's compliments: 'That is very good of you', she replies, 'I shall have a little kingdom then, where I shall give laws' (MM. p. 367). This remark comes at a stage when Dorothea's domestic life is dominated by Casaubon's jealous repression. Another such reference is when she is left free, and with considerable wealth, after Casaubon's death and plans to retain land and found a little colony. Dorothea assures Celia that instead of remarrying, she intends to play a part in the public world, and the terms she uses have connections with empire: 'I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a *little colony*,

where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend' (*MM.* p. 550, my italics). This utopian concept of colonisation is announced at the end of a chapter, which has started, with Dorothea's recollection of her past.¹³ Significantly, her individual history is linked to national historical experience, and it suggests the way in which Dorothea's thinking may be coloured by the larger culture of empire and the utopian factor in England's expansion overseas. Dorothea desires to reconstruct and to rearrange people's lives here in England, but the creation of a 'colony' has inevitable associations with what the English, or more precisely the British, are up to abroad. It is also significant that it reminds one of Maggie's wish to be the Queen of the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss* and that parallel points to the youthful ingenuousness of Dorothea's plans.

Dorothea's Encounter with Rome

The primary encounter with the foreign takes place during Dorothea and Casaubon's honeymoon visit to Rome, which physically takes the characters out of England, and metaphorically develops them beyond the narrow confines of self-interest. The enlargement of the plot helps to broaden the minds of the characters, and particularly awakens Dorothea's to a deep, wide and even troubling awareness of the other. Dorothea's experience in Rome works on different levels ranging from the individual to the national. Firstly, in chapters 19 to 23, which are set in Rome, Eliot stresses Dorothea's changing perception of Casaubon. The sojourn in Rome is also a metaphorical journey into the foreign world of marriage where Dorothea (and to some extent Casaubon) discover the 'otherness' of their partner. Secondly, Rome is the only

¹³ Allan Mintz relates Dorothea's philanthropic wish for a colony to George Eliot's desire to 'return a disinherited class to direct contact with the land' and that she displays sympathy in the novel to

foreign place in the novel and, perhaps because it sets ordinary life at a distance, it shows the different reactions of three characters towards obtaining a vocation. In Rome Casaubon appears as a narrow-minded scholar and passionless husband, Dorothea awakens from her dreams of girlhood to anxiety at the real world of marriage, and Ladislav with his confident and wider views is presented as an antithesis of Casaubon. Lastly, Englishness, represented by Dorothea and Casaubon, confronts its foreign counterpart in Rome.

Enlargement of the self from narrowness towards a 'general life' is a target set by George Eliot in her own experience of Rome a decade before she sends Dorothea there. Eliot herself was not impressed by Rome at first sight, but she found eventual fulfilment through travel when the experience expanded to influence her life as a whole. Eliot's own experience of the encounter with the foreign in Rome has an affinity to Dorothea's progress towards the general life. The purpose of encountering new and 'world-famous objects' is, for Eliot, to obtain the most positive benefit in a general sense. Travelling is thus important 'for enlargement of one's general life' in the long term, no matter if it brings disappointment at first in the short term. In her notes in her journal Eliot writes of her pleasure in experiencing the sights of Venice seen from a gondola: 'It is the sort of scene in which I could most readily forget my own existence, and feel melted into the general life' (*Life*, p. 314). Although the same kind of cultural enlargement might be expected for Dorothea, her sojourn in Rome at first reveals anxieties, differences and gaps between the two cultures.

The structure of the chapters preceding and including the journey to Rome is worth noting since Eliot shows her two main characters getting into trouble one after the other in provincial society. Dorothea's disappointment in her marriage is preceded by Lydgate's professional downfall after his encounter with the material and narrow realities of the provincial town in chapter 18. Eliot subtly turns from the confining troubles in Lydgate's case to the honeymoon of Miss Brooke in Rome, where private, vocational and aesthetic awakenings and enlargements are the primary concern.

The strikingly epic-like opening paragraph of chapter 19 is one of the key paragraphs in the novel juxtaposing the public world and the private, masculine and feminine, English and the foreign. It begins on the national level, mentioning George IV and the Duke of Wellington, continues on the provincial level with Mr Vincy and Middlemarch, and ends on the personal level, interlinked with an international one, announcing Dorothea's journey to Rome. The paragraph sets English political life in the context of the journey to Rome.

When George the Fourth was still reigning over the privacies of Windsor, when the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister, and Mr Vincy was mayor of the old corporation in Middlemarch, Mrs Casaubon, born Dorothea Brooke, had taken her wedding journey to Rome [...] (*MM*. p. 188).

Significantly, it plays on gender difference by naming Dorothea together with political figures such as George the Fourth, and the Duke of Wellington, which underlines the extent to which she stands on the margins of history. In contrast to those public historical figures, Dorothea is again framed as subordinate and indeed as 'other', someone who is in Rome only for private reasons as a 'newly-married-English-bride'. This juxtaposition reminds the reader of Dorothea's initial desire to learn 'how to lead a

grand life [...] here-now-in England'. The monumental quality of the public figures stands in contrast to Dorothea's changing perceptions before and after the journey.

As this paragraph develops, it gradually shifts from presenting to questioning Englishness, by stating how English travellers fail to acknowledge European art. The narrator emphasises that a lack of knowledge about Christian Art in Europe is common at that time, and 'even the most brilliant English critic of the day' fails to evaluate it correctly.¹⁴ In this way the narrator links English political life to the larger currents of European culture and comes to dwell finally on Romanticism. The paragraph moves from the general to the individual and back again, and at the same time presents a shift from an English to a European perspective, focusing on Rome as a city where certain 'long-haired German artists' and youths of other nations are gathered together (*MM*, p. 188).

After the general and historical information provided in the first paragraph, which establishes Dorothea as the English bride, the narrator introduces Ladislav with his abundant and curly hair is 'otherwise English in his equipment', while the 'dark-eyed, animated' Naumann is a German painter (*MM*, p. 188). The rest of the chapter is concerned with Naumann's artistic evaluation of, and foreign perspective on Dorothea, who is observed as the antithesis of the historical marble figures in the Vatican Museum. Naumann is presented as the spectator who first notices Dorothea in the Vatican museum, and who relates her to other female figures in history.¹⁵ A 'breathing,

¹⁴ It is noted by Rosemary Ashton that this critic was William Hazlitt. *Middlemarch*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (London: Penguin Books, 1986). Further references to this edition will be given within the text.

¹⁵ It may also be interpreted that the scene of Naumann's observation recalls the image of a *flâneur* who glimpses Dorothea during his leisurely activity, as an 'antithesis' amidst the crowd of marble statues in the museum. See Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* trans. by H. Zohn (London: Verso, 1983) pp. 35-66; see also John Rignall's discussion of Benjamin's

blooming girl', Dorothea is shown standing next to the statue of Ariadne and in contrast to the immobile marble figure.¹⁶ Naumann sees her as Cleopatra, Madonna or Antigone, and desires to unveil her secrets in his painting.¹⁷ Ladislav accompanies Naumann but does not share the same opinions. He objects that Naumann's approach to Dorothea is too narrow, and that his artistic imagination simplifies women into objects, tending to 'perturb and dull conceptions instead of raising them' (*MM*. p. 191). The discussion between Naumann and Ladislav reveals not only their different artistic approaches but also their individual and cultural differences. Ladislav emphasises Dorothea's Englishness and her rank in England: 'No, no sense, Naumann! English ladies are not at everybody's service as models' (*MM*. p. 191). At this point Ladislav comments on English culture in positive terms and associates himself with it, even though his reaction may involve more complicated feelings toward 'Mrs Casaubon'.

The second chapter in Rome combines Dorothea's awakening to the world of marriage with her experience of the historical capital. Dorothea inwardly thinks about her husband, about her new married life and about Rome, and her marks of unhappiness are revealed.¹⁸ Her encounter with Casaubon seems to bewilder her, disturbing her own sense of self. '[I]n the midst of her confused thought and passion, the mental act that was struggling forth into clearness was a self-accusing cry that her feeling of desolation

flâneur, that *flâneur*'s 'vision is both wide-ranging and penetrating at the same time; he can read the signs of the streets and unlock their secrets'. Rignall also finds 'some characteristics of a *flâneur*' in Ladislav (p. 10). *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁶ E. B. Michie points out that 'Rome was the perfect arena to stage the spectator's confrontation with a concept of cultural wholeness that implicitly excluded her', (p. 147). Michie argues that classical culture, represented by Rome and its heritage in Western civilization, is 'defined as patriarchal', and no place for Dorothea, who is significantly related to the historical figures of women. 'High Art and Science Always Require the Whole Man: Culture and Menstruation in *Middlemarch*', in *Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion. Gender Difference and the Victorian Woman Writer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ In this context see Gerhard Joseph, 'The *Antigone* as Cultural Touchstone: Matthew Arnold, Hegel, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Drabble', *PMLA*, 96: 1 (1981), 22-35.

¹⁸ David Carroll, says that 'there is no correlation between Dorothea's provincial hypothesis and the European reality', (p. 245). *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretation: A Reading of the Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

was the fault of her own spiritual poverty' (*MM*. p. 192). Her unhappiness is turned into self-recrimination, a process that suggests the effect both of her puritan upbringing and of her subordinate status as a woman. The paragraph continues by juxtaposing Dorothea's dreamlike expectations in girlhood with her bitter experiences in Rome: 'after the brief narrow experience of her girlhood she was beholding Rome, the city of invisible history' (*MM*. p. 192). Her misdirected expectations before she gets married are replaced by anxiety and unhappiness, and the honeymoon throws her into turmoil at the threshold of her new life. She had stepped into the world of marriage hoping that it would open up to her real knowledge and definite duties, and now Rome has become a mirror of her frustration and her ruined hopes in matrimony. Its ruins seem to represent her dashed hopes: 'this stupendous fragmentariness heightened the dreamlike strangeness of her bridal life' (*MM*. p. 192).

Dorothea is thus presented as a 'young ardent creature' overwhelmed by Rome and its ancestral beauty, and frustrated by Casaubon and his key to mythology.

Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; *the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of an alien world*: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degeneration, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion (*MM*. p. 193, my italics).

In a parallel way to Mrs Transome's shock at encountering her son, Dorothea's vision and ideas are confused by her confrontation with the marble statues of this foreign city. Her enthusiastic and emotional gaze is disturbed by the cold and monotonous objects of 'an alien world'. As the narrator suggests, Rome brings the dichotomies in Dorothea's

life to the surface, as present and past, provincial life and metropolitan life, youth and history are collide.

The circular movement of the narration in chapters 19 to 20, which introduces and then returns to the moment when Dorothea is being observed by Naumann and Ladislav while she herself is also dreaming and imagining beyond the images in front of her, highlights the parallel effects of Dorothea's negative experience. The two passages that describe this moment reveal Dorothea's changing perception in terms of the contradictory elements of looking and seeing.

[S]he was not looking at the sculpture, probably not thinking of it: *her large eyes were fixed dreamily on a streak of sunlight* which fell across the floor [...] (MM. p. 189).

The streak of sunlight implies Dorothea's unfulfilled hope for enlightenment and knowledge. No other hint is given as to Dorothea's condition and state of mind, and it seems that she may have been dreaming about her future. Yet, chapter 20 ends with a flashback recalling what Dorothea thinks inwardly after her first quarrel with Casaubon. The experience of the first quarrel in her marriage is not separate from Dorothea's feelings for Rome. Both encounters are painful. Dorothea notices the light neither on the floor nor on the statues in the museum.

She did not really *see the streak of sunlight* on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home and *over the English fields and elms* and hedge-bordered highroads: and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been. But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow – the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards *the fullest truth* [...] (MM. p. 202, my italics).

Dorothea's eyes and vision are presented in relation to her changing perception. Her eyes and her imagining of England are both characterized by a natural beauty in contrast to the marble eyes of the statues in the Vatican Museum. In the first instance 'her large

eyes were fixed dreamily on a streak of sunlight' in the second the narrator enlightens us that 'she did not really see the streak of sunlight' and adds that she was in fact seeing the light as to her future role. Her large black eyes have been considered 'unusual and strange' by her neighbours in England, and now in Rome they are the symbol of her confused vision. Her desire to attain knowledge 'here-now in England' is problematized in Rome amidst a clutter of historical objects. Dorothea's enlarged vision is directed towards private and national matters, while the agony of encountering the foreign is presented in terms of her Englishness, and it is an agony through which she begins to attain the fullest truth. Her large eyes, which failed to see Casaubon in a true light in Middlemarch, start to see 'the fullest truth' in Rome. Her mind is full with the light over English fields and over her own possible role as she imagines her domestic and national future. Dorothea's dissatisfaction during her private encounter with the other sex sets off recollection of her home, the Midlands, England.¹⁹ This inward vision of 'years to come in her own home and *over the English fields and elms*' is then questioned after her return home.

In Dorothea's confused perception after her encounter with the foreign the question of 'what shall I do?' occurs in crucial moments at home and is presented in relation to her literal and metaphorical vision. Dorothea searches for a duty in her married life and this search is again described in terms of images of looking and seeing. The first incident is when Dorothea looks out from the window with questioning eyes and sees her 'moral imprisonment [...] with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape' at Lowick in winter (*MM.* p. 274). As her vision in Rome started to indicate, Dorothea's imprisonment is

¹⁹ Similar to Dorothea's meditations here, John Goode says that the Midlands is 'the place you have to leave in order to invoke its universality', because 'the further you get away from the Midlands, the more central it becomes', (p. 173). 'Remembering Anywhere, Notes Towards the Definition of A Midlands Writer', *GE-GHLS*, 24-25 (1993), 163-173.

related to the dullness of Casaubon's life style, which is reflected in the English winter landscape.

In the first minutes when Dorothea *looked out* she felt nothing but the dreary oppression; then came a keen remembrance, and turning away from the window she walked round the room. The ideas and hopes which were living in her mind when *she first saw this room* nearly three months before [...] *her wandering gaze* came to the group of miniatures, and there at last *she saw something* which had gathered new breath and meaning: it was the miniature of Will Ladislaw's grandmother [...]. She felt a new companionship with it [...] *could see how she was looking at*. [...]he colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and *eyes seemed to be sending out light* [...] the vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea (*MM.* p. 275, my italics).

The narrator connects this very idea immediately to the miniature of Ladislaw's grandmother and identifies Dorothea with her. This scene combines the female world with the male, and the present with the past, as both are women who failed to see the fullest truth at first and are imprisoned by their defective vision.

Another famous scene towards the end of the novel where, after a night of anguish, Dorothea looks out from the window on a bright morning, dramatizes her awakening to a larger world: 'she awoke – not with any amazed wondering where she was or what happened, but with clear consciousness [...] she had waked to a new condition: she felt as if her soul had been liberated' (*MM.* p. 787). Before coming to any resolution on 'what should I do?' she opens 'her curtains' to the world and to nature: 'On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby, in the field she could see figures moving [...]far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the *largeness of the world*' (*MM.* p. 788, my italics). She is awakened to the natural and pure world and determines to act selflessly.²⁰ She understands and even sympathises

²⁰ Rosemary Ashton says that Dorothea undergoes a Spinozan education in the extension of her sympathy, and 'moves through her disillusion with her marriage to Casaubon to a greater "clearness" of

with the 'another' woman, Rosamond and decides to make a second attempt at saving Lydgate and Rosamond from their troubles. Furthermore, the scene confronts Dorothea with another class at a moment when she is questioning herself. It portrays the different worlds of Dorothea and of the figures she sees. It questions her uncertain future role by comparing her situation in her luxurious shelter with the people working outside. This, too, is a productive glimpse of a world that is figuratively foreign, inhabited by men and foreign who are as much strangers to her own way of life as those she encountered in Rome.

Mixed-blood in the Provinces

The other foreign element in the novel is Will Ladislaw, who offers a critique of Englishness. He is introduced to Dorothea in her first trip to Lowick after her engagement to Casaubon and he is first seen in a characteristic pose, sketching a picture of an English landscape. Ironically, the first information about him is given by Casaubon, who dwells on his shortcomings as a dilettante who is uncertain about choosing a profession.

On leaving Rugby, he declined to go to an English university, where I would gladly have placed him, and chose what I must consider an anomalous course of studying at Heidelberg. And now he wants to go abroad again without any special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a profession (*MM*. p. 81).

Indeed, the general image he conveys to Middlemarch society is that of a dilettante, with his wide range of interests and lack of vocation for the great part of the novel.²¹

perception about her relation to others', (p. 74). *George Eliot* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

²¹ For further reference to the term dilettante see R. H. Stephenson, who argues that Goethe distinguished 'between the negative and positive aspects of amateurism, between the dilettante on the one hand and the

Nevertheless Eliot presents his dilettantism as ultimately an advantage giving him the possibility of learning and understanding various occupations. Eliot provides clues to his being a dilettante only to show that he is in fact just the opposite. Ladislav prefers to prepare himself in European culture rather than attending an English university as Casaubon proposed. His dilettantism, in comparison to Casaubon's strict but shallow intellectual capacity, influences his career positively in the end.

Eliot includes Mr Brooke and Casaubon in her introduction of Ladislav, and later shows that Ladislav is more down to earth than either of them. Mr. Brooke sees Ladislav's sketching together with Dorothea, calls him an artist and draws a parallel with his own early days when he used to do 'a little in this way myself' (*MM*. p. 79). Ladislav quite knowingly corrects him, maintaining that he is not an artist, and saying that 'I only sketch a little' (*MM*. p. 79). Mr Brooke, who is repeatedly shown to be a man of 'acquiescent temper, miscellaneous opinions, and uncertain vote', is in fact the real dilettante in the novel, having travelled in his youth, he 'was held in this part of the country to have contracted a too rambling habit of mind. Probably his own 'inconsistency' helps him understand Dorothea's attachment to Ladislav at the end of the novel more than other people do.

Ladislav's cosmopolitan perspective is foregrounded in the Rome scenes where a pointed comparison between English and other cultures is put forward. He remains the only person who is not overwhelmed by his encounter with Rome, and this positive

amateur on the other, (p. 54). 'Last Universal Man – or Wilful Amateur? On the Claims made for His Natural Philosophy', in *Goethe Revisited: A Collection of Essays* ed. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson (London, New York: Calder, Riverrun, 1984), pp. 53-71. A similar approach contrasting the true artist and the dilettante can be observed in Caterina Water's 'The Dilettante and the Artist in Dickens' *Bleak House*', *Southern Review*, 17: 3 (1984), 232-249. Eliot unlike Dickens used the figure of dilettante, Ladislav in a positive sense.

approach continues throughout the novel. He is a citizen of the world and comfortably at home in the capital city of Rome.²² He is not restricted to a single nationality; he is a synthesis of English and European features. His mixed national perspective is unlike Harold Transome's ambiguous doubleness which combined negative versions of both. Ladislaw is more like Daniel Deronda in the next novel, a man who is someone more than single English. He plays a positive mediating role between different cultures, sexes and occupations, and this enables him to attain a fuller sense of self and a wider knowledge of the world than most of the other figures.

Significantly it is in Rome that Ladislaw announces that Casaubon's work 'should be thrown away, *as so much English scholarship* is, for want of knowing what is being done by the rest of the world' (*MM.* p. 208, my italics). In Rome Casaubon's futile efforts in his lifelong project are shown to be themselves a kind of dilettantism, ironically recalling his criticism of Ladislaw in England for not settling his mind on a definite subject. Casaubon, who theoretically seemed to promise access to the wider world, is shown 'lost among small closets and winding stairs' in Rome, and is no longer an alternative to the Englishness represented by Chettam (*MM.* p. 197). His limitations are exposed by Ladislaw's openness towards other languages and other cultures and his intellectual narrowness is represented not as an admirable form of scholarly concentration, but as a paralysis which affects him both as a husband and as a teacher. Even though he studies a large subject such as mythology, he can benefit neither from his knowledge of Greek and Latin nor from his visits to the historical sites of Rome. His ignorance of German, the language he most needs as a scholar, is contrasted to Ladislaw's multi-lingualism: 'if Mr Casaubon read German he would save himself a

²² J. Rignall points out that '[w]ith his Polish blood, German education, and European travels, he is a citizen of a wider world than provincial Middlemarch, and he brings to bear on it a different perspective',

great deal of trouble' (*MM.* p. 208, my italics). Casaubon is ironically fettered by his narrow English approach towards his studies; thus, his failure is projected onto the national level. He represents the limitations of English-masculine knowledge and locks himself and his knowledge inside the walls of the library at the Vatican.

Unlike Dorothea's supposed teacher Casaubon, Ladislaw acts here as a type of teacher and he is not offended by the critical observations of his pupil. For Dorothea art is a foreign language, as she observed during her first meeting with Ladislaw at Tipton: 'They are a language I do not understand [...] just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me' (*MM.* p. 79). And she feels unconfident about commenting on the artistic value of any subject. In the Rome scene Ladislaw echoes her earlier pronouncement when he states that 'art is an old language with a great many artificial affected styles' (*MM.* p. 206). Dorothea's symbolic likening of art to language is enlarged by Ladislaw's explanation and is characteristic of the way in which ideas are developed and horizons expanded in the interaction between them.²³ Before his intervention she is unable to value and understand the beauty of art and its relation to life in Rome. She feels that the artistic subjects in Rome are a 'masque with enigmatical costumes' (*MM.* p. 193), and in conversation with Ladislaw she acknowledges that when she enters a room full of pictures she first feels herself 'in the presence of some higher life than my own. But when I begin to examine the pictures one by one, the life goes out of them' (*MM.* p. 206). She only appreciates art which relates to the facts of real life until Ladislaw instructs her about the beauty of the picturesque in the real world. He explains to Dorothea that knowledge and feeling are inter-related for a poet, 'a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling and feeling flashes back

as a new organ of knowledge' (*MM.* p. 223). In other words, Ladislav proposes a synthesis of knowledge and feeling, soul and intellect, rather than a hierarchy in which one is set above the other.

The cultural encounter becomes a learning and teaching process through the interaction of Ladislav and Dorothea, as opposed to the bald pronouncements that characterize Casaubon. Ladislav criticises the ways in which Dorothea has been brought up, castigating the 'hereticism' of her excessive sympathy towards those who are denied the opportunities she enjoys. However, what Ladislav criticises most are the conditions which directed her to be heretical in this way. He feels that she is too prepared to sacrifice herself as many other women do, (and as Philip criticizes Maggie for doing by shutting herself up 'in a narrow self-delusive fanaticism' (*MF.* p. 327)). On the other hand, Dorothea is shown recognising that the masculine perspective does not guarantee complete knowledge, and begins to learn about art and its wholeness from Ladislav.

Ladislav is a man of the future. He represents modern man, and stands for tolerance towards others and a breadth of knowledge that throws into relief the limitations of Middlemarch. Becoming the editor of Mr Brooke's newspaper, *The Pioneer* during his election campaign, he is closely related to provincial public opinion, and his perspective, enriched by his foreign connections, is one that appeals to Mr Brooke. Other characters who have a similarly high opinion of him are Dorothea and Lydgate; and it is significant that all share similar experiences and have been educated abroad. By contrast Ladislav is criticised and disliked particularly by Casaubon and Sir James, who in many ways most typically represents the model of an ordinary English landowner. Sir

²³ For a detailed discussion of Dorothea's experience of the language of art, see Joseph Wiesenfarth, 'Middlemarch: The Language of Art,' *PMLA*, 97: 3 (1982), 363-378.

James finds Ladislav's lack of social status a threatening factor in Middlemarch society, and objects to Ladislav's staying in the town after Casaubon's death. He asks Mr Brooke to 'get rid of Ladislav', 'send him out of the country' and even 'spend money on him' to secure a position 'in the suite of some Colonial Governor' (*MM.* pp. 483-485). Banishment to the colonies seems to be the appropriate treatment for such an alien to Sir James's conventional mind, and the main reason is Ladislav's foreign connections. The novel, however, evaluates him very differently.

The narrow materialism of provincial society is recalled by Sir James's attitude towards Ladislav and it emerges clearly on other occasions. Dorothea and Ladislav have further interviews back in England, yet unlike their meeting in Rome, these are interrupted either by Casaubon's jealousy or by the narrowness of provincial life. When they meet after Casaubon's death the 'meeting was very different from their first meeting in Rome' (*MM.* p. 541). Ladislav announces to Dorothea plans to leave the neighbourhood since he is a 'man with only a portmanteau' he can begin a new life anywhere else (*MM.* p. 544). Their conversation, however, ends prematurely by the crucial intervention of Sir James, who appears at the door and seems to embody in threatening fashion the narrowness of the provincial world.

The plot for Miss Brooke ends in the metropolis of London, uniting her with Ladislav, the most cosmopolitan character in the novel. As the wife and intellectual partner of Ladislav, she will be able to, it is implied, enter and influence the public world indirectly through her husband and her son, running 'underground like the rivers in Greece' (*MM.* p. 46). On the one hand, there is a tone of regret, an admission, almost, of failure in the epilogue: 'Many who know her, thought it a pity' and it is shared by many of Eliot's readers (*MM.* p. 836). On the other hand, there is an attempt to integrate this

vision of Dorothea's future with an organic ideal. The birth and inheritance of her son suggests the continuity of the social organism on a material level. Symbolically, the England of Dorothea's future could be said to combine old and new, self and foreign, masculine and feminine, and these form a synthesis of complex elements rather than a homogenous, narrow and single perspective. Eliot's quest is for her English characters to enlarge their views and an important way of achieving this is through encountering the other, the foreign, which ends in a form of moral and mental enlargement. If Dorothea can be said to have any kind of national role, it is as a guide towards a broader understanding and wider perspectives 'here – now – in England' than English provincial life will ordinarily allow.²⁴

Conclusion

The impact of foreign experiences and ideas has been shown to be – at least for the principal character in the novel – a broadly formative one which contributes to the enlargement of the individual. Otherness in the novel can be defined by gender, class or cultural and national differences. Marriage, travel and the search for a vocation are forms of experience in which the self encounters the 'other', and they function to enlarge, to reconstruct, and consequently to educate the characters in the novel. Dorothea herself has developed through a series of encounters with the foreign and the positive outcome of those encounters can be seen in her move to London at the end of the novel.

²⁴ Kathleen Blake is one of the critics satisfied with the ending of the novel, saying that 'if the main characters all slip below their own intention, the novel does not', (p. 311). 'Middlemarch and the Women Question', *Nineteenth-century Fiction*, 31 (1976-77), 285-313.

There is a sense of the foreign as a necessary and inevitable part of the modern world at the end of *Middlemarch*. This is no longer the closely knit society of the earlier novels, but a wider world with a modern life style, informed by changing conditions and social mobility. The role of the foreign becomes more important as the social milieu becomes more diverse. The community reaches the point where there has to be interaction between different social and cultural backgrounds. There are still elements of the kind of idyllic rural world presented in *Adam Bede*, but they are brought into contact with a wider world in which the foreign plays a more important part than in the earlier novels. Nevertheless realism acknowledges provincial resistance to the foreign, and it is clear that the foreign person or 'outsider' has negative connotations for most of the inhabitants of Middlemarch. Outsiders are not welcomed and easily accommodated in the town, and both Bulstrode and Lydgate, as well as Ladislav, leave Middlemarch at the end of the novel.²⁵ There seems to be no change in the attitudes of Middlemarchers towards the foreign throughout the novel; when there is speculation about Mr Bulstrode towards the end, Mrs Bulstrode's neighbours pity her on the grounds that it will be hard 'for her to go among foreigners' (*MM.* p. 744). For them having to live among foreign people is a fate to be pitied, and similar comments have been made about Lydgate at the beginning of the novel. This kind of narrow cultural outlook is not different from that of the local people in 'Amos Barton' when Amos leaves, and from that of the Poysers, who are saddened by the idea of going and dying among strangers in *Adam Bede*. Nevertheless, the novel as a whole makes the opposite case. Eliot represents the foreign positively in terms of culture and education in this novel, and it seems that the foreign

²⁵ R. A. York, argues that Middlemarch 'expels two strangers, Bulstrode and Lydgate, and loses Dorothea to another', (p. 136). *Strangers and Secrets: Communication in the Nineteenth Century Novel* (London, Toronto: Associate University Press, 1994). In other words Middlemarch 'purifies and isolates itself', but I would argue that even if Middlemarch is marked by deep conservatism, Eliot does offer an enlargement both for the provincial community, and for her characters by moving them to cosmopolitan cities.

involves wider perspectives than English ones. Encountering it broadens the world of the individual and, by implication, the larger world of international culture.

Through a complex and ambiguous treatment of the individual and cultural forms of the other, and of the encounter between them, *Middlemarch* succeeds in presenting a gradual progress towards a cosmopolitan world and a form of cultural relativism. Aspects of national identity are invoked beyond those class distinctions which were the focus of, for example, *Adam Bede*. The world of the novel is enlarged, and the heroine travels beyond England and can even marry a half-foreign suitor with no acceptable social connections. The people of Middlemarch, unlike the inhabitants of Hayslope in *Adam Bede*, have to accept Dorothea's marriage to Ladislav, who not only occupies a lower social position but is considered scandalously foreign. 'Intellectual narrowness' in England is undergoing erosion and the hostility of provincial people to those 'who differ from them in customs and beliefs' changes to a more tolerant outlook which implies a degree of cultural relativism (*Letters*, VI, p. 301-2). That process is taken a stage further in Eliot's next and last novel *Daniel Deronda*, which begins in a sense where *Middlemarch* ends, and widens the setting and deepens the theme of the foreign in its interaction with English culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Multi-Encounters in *Daniel Deronda***Introduction**

Daniel Deronda is Eliot's only novel of English life which begins in a foreign setting, and it significantly concludes with a prospect of a foreign ideal. It portrays a larger world with a greater variety of foreign encounters than her earlier novels; in this sense it is, indeed, all about foreignness, for its characters, setting, and theme are strongly attached to the foreign in one way or another. The novel presents a broad social panorama, ranging from the upper class represented by the Mallingers and the Arrowpoints, through the middle-class Gascoignes, Davilows, and Meyricks, to servants, maids, and governesses. The aristocratic life that was merely illustrated as declining in *Felix Holt*, and negatively represented by Sir James Chettam's narrow perspective in *Middlemarch*, among other examples from the earlier novels, is explicitly explored and challenged in this novel, which focuses on aristocratic pursuits such as hunting, archery, riding and dancing. The social milieu is more elevated and more affluent in this last novel, and, with the important exception of the Gwendolen and her family, most of the characters have no financial worries. In this sense, the encounters with and travel to foreign parts are an aspect of English life, the privileged life of the wealthy. The horizons of English life are expanded to embrace the variety and mobility which are the mark of the new age.¹

¹ Gordon S. Haight states that *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot's 'only novel of contemporary life, reflects [the] changes' of the period it was written. Whereas 'English society depicted in her earlier novels was relatively stable; change in class or rank was rare. In the forty years since the Reform Bill, life had changed radically. The railway had penetrated to the remotest regions; the telegraph provided them instant communication; the Suez Canal had shrunk the globe. Men moved around it at speeds undreamt

Foreign experience is central to the action of the novel. Some characters have been abroad at crucial moments in their lives, others experience foreignness at home through encounters with foreigners. Hans Meyrick, Rex Gascoigne, Daniel Deronda and Mordecai have been educated in different European countries; Henleigh Grandcourt and Sir Hugo Mallinger have visited Europe as affluent tourists; Mrs Davilow has lived in France with her second husband and travels to Genoa together with Mr Gascoigne to rescue Gwendolen after Grandcourt's death. Moreover, Gwendolen bears signs of her life in Paris before settling in Diplo and visits Europe twice at climactic moments of her life, first Leubronn where she meets Deronda at the beginning of the novel, and then Genoa where Grandcourt dies. Other characters namely, Herr Klesmer, Mirah and her father Lapidoth arrive in England as foreigners and each encounters English life differently. Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein or Alcharisi, half English by birth, never visits England and remains the most foreign person in the whole novel for many reasons. The most crucial development of the novel stems from her rejection of her origins, and this is not a merely individual decision since it is fraught with social, cultural and national significance. Daniel Deronda's mixed-identity is ironically the outcome of her rebellion against the cultural, religious and national roles imposed on her. Her role in the novel presents Eliot's 'starkest portrayal of female oppression' and in this sense, augurs the progress of women's emancipation in the following decades.²

The setting combines England with a variety of other foreign places, shifting between continental Europe and England, while other places such as the West (America), the colonies (India) and the West Indies, and the East (Palestine) are also mentioned in relation to significant incidents. This kind of structural shift between Europe and

of, amassing riches at home and abroad', (p. 458). *George Eliot: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985; originally published: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

England is first experimented within 'The Lifted Veil', which also has a narrative similarity with *Daniel Deronda* in that both works start with foreshadowing. Eliot's last novel takes further that opening to the East began in *Felix Holt* and the experience of enlargement through an encounter with a foreign culture presented in the Roman scenes in *Middlemarch*.

Daniel Deronda's unique characteristics give it a central role in my argument. It makes more extensive use of the foreign than any of the earlier novels covered in this thesis, and its distinctive aspects throw light on Eliot's opinions at the end of her writing career. Eliot's last work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, significantly continues some of the same ideas presented in *Daniel Deronda* where the foreign is specialized and explicitly represented by the Jews.³ This project has been much discussed by Eliot's readers, yet remains problematic, particularly from the post-colonialist perspective, raising the question of whether George Eliot reproduces or challenges the imperialist ideas that are current both in her society and in this novel.⁴ *Daniel Deronda* needs to be evaluated from different angles in order to appreciate Eliot's complex understanding of

² Gerlinde Röder-Bolton, p. 169.

³ However, my line is not to examine the historical dimension of these works, but rather the cultural formation of foreignness represented in the texts.

⁴ Two parts of the plot have been regarded as unequal by many readers, though for different reasons. Eliot's choosing the Jewish elements at the core of her new novel of English life, as Blackwood announced, has often been found problematic. F. R. Leavis distinguishes the inequality and separateness of two sides of the plot in *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948); William Baker notes Eliot's attempt to reconstruct the Jewish identity as homogenous, in his 'George Eliot's Reading in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historians: A Note on the Background of *Daniel Deronda*', *Victorian Studies*, 15 (1972), 463-473. Neil McCraw follows this argument in *George Eliot and Victorian Historiography: Imagining the National Past* (London: Macmillan, 2000). Reina Lewis, examines how George Eliot's representation of Jews and Judaism in *Daniel Deronda* relates to the Orientalist paradigm. Lewis gives a summary of contemporary critical responses during the time it was written for its 'holding up a Jew, the Daniel of the title, as an emblem of an ancient but thriving Jewish culture to which England should look for inspiration. Whilst the earlier 'English' half was uniformly well received', (p. 191). She argues that the 'deployment of Jews as a signifier of otherness for English society reinforces, despite its attempts to challenge, naturalized ideologies of racial difference, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 192. Graham Martin sees Daniel's ideas of humanity and sensitivity functioning as a contrast to Gwendolen's narrow vision and the insularity of the characters of English society such as the Arrowpoints and Malingers. '*Daniel Deronda*: George Eliot and

the foreign. Eliot's treatment of Europe and the other foreign places such as the East can be discerned from her ambivalent presentation of the latter. My argument is going to investigate the enlargement achieved in both halves of the novel, and to show how Eliot reaches the aim she proposed for her reader. The twenty-first-century reader may, of course, see the issues from a different angle, and be more aware of the problematic nature of the idealized Jewish ending, but I aim to show how that idealized ending is qualified by the complexity of Eliot's understanding.

Indefiniteness and mobility are foregrounded as the essence of the new type of English life. This modern life is characterized by rootlessness, rather than a definite acquaintance with a securely established domestic and social world.⁵ This is particularly discernible in the form of either a longing for roots, or a desire to break away from them.⁶ Many of the characters are homeless and wanderers, either literally like Gwendolen, her family, and Deronda, or figuratively like Mordecai, Mirah, Klesmer, and the Jews in general, while those who are firmly settled such as the Arrowpoints, the Mallingers and the Gascoignes also experience indefiniteness indirectly, and are aware of the conditions. The main characters are no longer members of a narrow community as in Eliot's earlier novels, but rather people who reach beyond not only provincial, but also national borders. The enlargement of the self that they experience is accompanied by a wide-ranging depiction of the world, as Eliot's awareness of the complexity of

Political Change,' in *Critical Essays on George Eliot*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 133-150.

⁵ James Harrison says that 'in no previous novel has George Eliot provided so little sense of stability and continuity', (p. 511). 'The Root of the Matter with *Daniel Deronda*', *Philological Quarterly*, 68:4 (1989), 509-523.

⁶ On this context see James Harrison, who says: 'in no previous novel George Eliot provided so little sense of stability or continuity' and suggests that there are different levels of rootlessness in the novel, and last of them is 'the historic rootlessness of the Jewish race as a whole', 'The Root of the Matter with *Daniel Deronda*'.

things is more fully reflected in her last novel.⁷ She achieves a kind of cultural relativism here in dramatizing a life of increased social mobility, and sceptical loyalty to one's own roots and cultural values. The novel both embodies what Eliot has been doing in her earlier novels and at the same time experiments with structural, narrational and thematic forms in way that indicates what she might have liked to probe further in the future. Eliot's movement from a Romantic to a Modern grasp of life can thus be clearly seen in this novel. Metaphors for the 'other' in terms of gender, culture and nation, social criticism and both a critique of imperialism and a diverse presentation of it, are offered to the reader in an attempt to widen the English vision.

European Sights

The opening scene is foreign for two reasons: firstly it gathers crowds of different people (mostly European) together in a gambling casino in a German Spa, and secondly, the foreign place and the people are introduced through the eyes of Daniel Deronda, whose foreign connections are indicated in that he is an outsider in that particular environment. The space is not large and illuminating, but dull and monotonous for Deronda, who is appointed to observe, speculate and even act as a mysterious spectator in this scene.⁸ The narrator distinguishes him from the collective vision of the gamblers by twinning him with the narratorial observation. Nevertheless, the scene determines both the internal development of these characters and also the thematical progress of the novel's ending.

⁷ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*, observes that foreign culture in the novel is 'opposed to that of English high society – or of England [...], given that the novel's morally admirable characters are all foreigners – as *Gemeinschaft* is opposed to *Gesellschaft*', p. 225.

The description of the dull and smoky atmosphere is followed by the ironic observation that this crowd is made up of individuals who are all occupied in the same vain pursuit of money.⁹ People from a variety of different backgrounds are taking pleasure in either losing or gaining money and their individuality is reduced by the sameness and monotony of their action.

Those who were taking their pleasure at a higher strength, and were absorbed in play, showed very distant varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Graeco-Italian and miscellaneous German, English aristocratic and English plebeian. Here certainly was a striking admission of human equality (*DD*. p. 8).

'Human equality' is only ironically achieved at the gambling table, where interests are of a primitive and selfish kind.¹⁰ It is as if all these people are from the same roots, their brains fed by the same values. They are not individuals, but seem to wear masks in different colours to hide their commonness.

But while every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask – as if they had all eaten of the same root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of the action (*DD*. p. 9).

Their attention is locked onto the narrow, materialistic and primitive passion for gambling, which narrows the human spirit, instead of illuminating and enlarging individual identity, which is the main aim of travelling for Eliot.¹¹ Both the indifferent individualism of the new age and the egoism of gambling have made people in this saloon focus on their own narrow interests. We may be reminded here of the

⁸ Deronda's speculative role is similar to that of Ladislaw and Naumann in the Vatican Museum. Unlike their harmony with the setting, Deronda is foreign to it.

⁹ James Harrison, says that *Daniel Deronda* with its cosmopolitan assemblage of persons all with nothing better to do with their time than to kill it at considerable expense, is a distillation of *ennui*, of bored restlessness, of a sense of life cut off at the roots, 'The Root of the Matter with *Daniel Deronda*', p. 510.

¹⁰ Bryan Cheyette evaluates this scene as an "embodiment of 'denationality' and the false universalism of 'cosmopolitan' materialism", (p. 49). *Construction of the Jew in English Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Carroll, sees the scene as 'an infernal parody of divine unity, in which all Europe is represented and reduced to its lowest common denominator, gambling for money', p. 279. *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations*.

monotonous action of weaving and the narrow materialism which reduce Silas Marner's life to the level of an insect, or Lydgate's narrow consciousness as described in his gambling sessions in *Middlemarch*. In this case, however, Eliot extends the narrow monotony to show how gambling is an increasing fashion for travellers from all over Europe.¹² What is more, while the static, unified and homogeneous worlds of earlier novels such as *Adam Bede* or *The Mill on the Floss* had positive examples of individuality, this cosmopolitan gambling saloon presents only the superficial individuality of nationality which overlays a monotonous sameness of moral being.¹³

Another object for Deronda's observation is a little boy whose interest lies in something different from gambling.

The one exception was a melancholy little boy, with his knees and calves simply in their natural clothing of epidermis, but for the rest of his person in a fancy dress. He alone had his face turned towards the doorway, and fixing on it the blank gaze of a bedizened child stationed as a masquerading advertisement on the platform of an itinerant show, stood close behind a lady deeply engaged at the roulette-table (*DD*. p. 8).

By noticing the boy's genuineness in his fancy dress and in this artificial environment, Deronda recalls one of the basic figures of Romanticism: the innocent child.¹⁴ This image is developed when he compares the gambling of Spanish shepherd-boys to that of the present gambling scene.

Deronda's first thought when his eyes fell on this scene of dull, gas-poisoned absorption was that gambling of Spanish shepherd-boys had seemed to him more enviable: so far Rousseau might be justified in

¹¹ According to her entry to her journal 'Recollections of Italy' in their second visit to Italy.

¹² See E. D. Ermarth, 'George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy', for the account of gambling as 'a kind of unholy opposite to sympathetic relationship', p. 35.

¹³ It is significant that mass homogeneity, criticized by Foucault, is represented at this point where there is obviously no sympathy between the individuals.

¹⁴ See Carolyn Steedmann for the child image in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931* (London: Virago, 1990) and also *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (London: Virago, 1995) by the same writer.

maintaining that art and science had done a poor service to mankind (DD. p. 9).

Idyllic and artificial, romantic and modern forms of life are compared to each other as the 'dull, gas-poisoned' atmosphere of gambling is contrasted with 'the gambling of Spanish shepherd-boys', who in Rousseau's view, are poisoned by society.¹⁵ Deronda's nostalgia for the romantic and natural life of the shepherd-boys clashes with the modern and yet artificial features of the gambling saloon.

Gwendolen's Encounter with Foreignness

The main object of Deronda's critical gaze is a striking young English lady, Gwendolen Harleth, the spoiled child of Mrs Davilow as the title of the first book indicates. She is not herself foreign, but the strangeness of her situation invites Deronda's speculation – and the fact that his speculative gaze interrogates the figure of an English woman indicates how this novel will differ from its predecessors.¹⁶ It starts by raising questions and undertakes to suggest possible clues for the unknown, in other words beginning to lift the veil in a way that recalls the earlier experimental story of 'The Lifted Veil'.¹⁷ The object of Deronda's interest, Gwendolen Harleth, is both likened and contrasted to the dark-smoky atmosphere of the gambling saloon. The narrator, together with Deronda, associates her with the gambling saloon in that both are double-sided, having the potential to be beautiful and ugly, good and evil, bright and dark. Her delicate

¹⁵ See Hugh Witemeyer 'George Eliot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau', *Comparative Literature Studies* (1979), 121-131.

¹⁶ John Rignall sees the opening scene as 'an arresting departure from the usual procedures of 19th-century realist fiction [which] anticipates the practice of later writers like Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf', *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 83-84.

¹⁷ In structural terms, *Daniel Deronda* seems to extend what Eliot had experimented within the 'Lifted Veil' through a flashback in Gwendolen's history, and in thematic terms through questioning the notion of sympathy. As with Latimer's strange power of sight, this novel presents diverse challenges to sympathy.

beauty is ironically out of place rather like Dorothea providing an antithesis to the marble statues in the Vatican Museum. If the monotonous unity of the gambling atmosphere is potentially the first sign of the modern age, in which individuals lose contact with their roots, that modern age is to be explored particularly intensively in the figure of Gwendolen.

Setting plays a crucial role in Gwendolen's life, she runs away to Leubronn to make a new beginning after she has learned of Grandcourt's affair with Lydia Glasher, but Leubronn turns out to be the place where she starts to grasp the complexities of life beyond her self-centred existence in England. In the opening scene her beauty is observed sceptically, and this is a foretast^{te} of what is to come, for we see her subjected to a critical or patronizing male gaze later in the novel when she is observed by other men such as the musician Klesmer, and Henleigh Grandcourt.

[...H]e was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict (*DD*. p. 10).

Her beauty takes on a deeper meaning under Deronda's questioning gaze, and she starts to lose what she has gained in gambling. Her financial loss is clearly substituted by a process of moral development which begins in Leubronn.

Gwendolen is self-centred, and her imperiously egoistic character is repeatedly described with imperial terminology, such as her having a 'domestic empire', and her being 'a queen' (*DD*. p. 41). Metaphors of empire are used to define her power over

others.¹⁸ Gwendolen's distance from her sisters, and from other women in general is suggested by the description of her as 'a princess in exile' (*DD*. p. 25). Their governess, for example, makes the same point that 'Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet' (*DD*. p. 39). The imperialistic images attributed to her such as 'a queen in exile', 'an empress at home', or an 'empress of luck', ironically imply her limited knowledge ~~of~~^{or} lack of interest in the inferior 'other'. For instance she 'had no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two daughters; but he had been a West Indian' (*DD*. p. 24). The West Indies, the source of her maternal grandfather's fortune, are internalized as an empty place where Englishman gained their wealth, and no further questions are raised in Gwendolen's typical imperious mind. In another parallel example, this kind of typical English approach is questioned within itself when Miss Arrowpoint resists her wealthy parents in her decision to marry Klesmer, making the point that their land and fortune are gained in trade and therefore it is unreasonable to follow English traditions too strictly.¹⁹ These different experiences of the young representatives of the English female world reveal a parallel connection to the foreign element in English life. Gwendolen's mother loses her fortune, gained in the colonies by her father, and this loss decisively ~~which~~ affects Gwendolen's life, while Miss Arrowpoint refuses her inheritance in order to marry the foreign musician Klesmer. English life is touched by different types and levels of the foreign and this is part of that modern life where interaction with the broader community is inevitable.

¹⁸ Katherine Bailey Linehan, stresses that imperial terminology is used in describing 'operation of sexism and imperialism' in Gwendolen's life because 'in the national and class-oriented aspects of Eliot's critique of British imperialism, women are clearly implicated alongside men as partners in an oppressively elitist and racist social regime. At the same time Eliot recognizes a power differential between men and women within that upper class', (p. 332). 'Mixed Politics: The Critique of Imperialism in *Daniel Deronda*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 34:3 (1992), 323-346.

¹⁹ For an earlier discussion on continuity, roots and conservatism in Eliot see Thomas Pinney, 'The Authority of the Past in George Eliot's Novels', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 21 (1966), 131-147. Pinney argues that the past represents goodness for Eliot's characters when for example, Maggie rejects Stephen, or Eppie rejects Godfrey and Esther rejects Harold. See also William Baker, 'Memory: Eliot and Lewes "the Past is a Foreign Country: They do Things Differently there"', *GE-GHLS*, 24-25 (1993), 118-131.

Gwendolen's actions are motivated not only by her selfish desires but at the same time by the more general predicament of women within a gender-differentiated world. The conditions of modern life are implied in the rootless, homeless and mobile conditions of Gwendolen's life, while her encounters with men of different types undermine her sense of superiority. Her early life has been spent 'roving from one foreign watering-place or Parisian apartment to another' with her family due to her step-father's occupation (*DD.* p. 23) and from the first scene of the novel she is subjected to the superior gaze of men.

When Gwendolen considers making a career as a singer, she is rebuffed by the professional rigour of the musician Klesmer. Beyond being a typical musician, Herr Klesmer is introduced as 'a felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave, and the Semite, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles' (*DD.* p. 47). His foreignness challenges the narrowness of English understanding. His musical ability evokes wider horizons as he 'fetched as much variety and depth of passion out of the piano' (*DD.* p. 49).²⁰ He criticises the music that Gwendolen sings as 'a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture [...] the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon', with 'no sense of the universal' (*DD.* p. 49). Her music satisfies the English audience but not the cosmopolitan musician. As Miss Arrowpoint puts it: 'He can hardly tolerate anything we English do in music' (*DD.* p. 49). Klesmer's first-rate music is equal to that of Mendelssohn or Schubert, and in his selective approach, he excludes Gwendolen from that world of excellence. He sharply defines Gwendolen as lacking talent, education and the ability to achieve success in wider musical world. He makes Gwendolen painfully

aware of the reality that her musical talent is not sufficient for her to make a career with it on the stage. And this leaves her in the predicament of having to choose between marrying Grandcourt and becoming a governess.

Klesmer's foreignness is distinctively exhibited in relation to Englishness during his second appearance in the novel at the Archery Meeting, where he is observed by Gwendolen in contrast to 'the average group of English county people' (*DD*. p. 102). When he enters 'an assemblage where the men had all that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman,' his foreign appearance is emphasised (*DD*. p. 102). Racial features are combined with cultural expectation and can be observed in Klesmer's figure and clothing, which are those of an artist who, however comically out of place he may seem, is clearly superior to the well-bred Englishmen characterized, like Mr Arrowpoint, by 'nullity of face and perfect tailoring' (*DD*. p. 103).

The ideological differences between Klesmer and ordinary Englishmen are seen in another scene, where Mr Bult, a possible suitor to Catherine Arrowpoint, is shown as typically bluff and English in his approach both to Klesmer and to public issues.

Mr Bult, an esteemed party man who [...] had strong opinions concerning the districts of the Niger, was much at home also in the Brazil, spoke with decision of affairs in the South Seas, [...] had the general solidity and suffusive pinkness of a healthy Briton [...]. Klesmer he hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being who ought to have a vote [...] (*DD*. p. 241).

²⁰ For Klesmer's connections to German musical culture see Delia de Sousa Correa, 'George Eliot and the Germanic "Musical Magus"', in *George Eliot and Europe*, ed. by John Rignall (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 98-112.

Mr Bult is pictured as typically English in terms of his appearance, opinions and imperialistic outlook.²¹ Eliot deliberately challenges his conventional English views through Klesmer's intelligent responses. Klesmer defines himself as 'the Wandering Jew' in the same passage, and thus embraces the historical fate of his race. With his musical talent and cosmopolitan ideas he 'looks forward to a fusion of races' (*DD*. p. 242), and becomes the first Jewish identity to be exposed in the novel. His foreignness is also individualized, since Eliot goes on to portray different types of Jew. He represents the elite artistic class, and defines his Jewish identity in broader terms than an enthusiastic active nationalist, like Mordecai.²²

The most significant reaction to Klesmer comes from his 'hosts' or 'his patrons' as the narrator's initial ironic comment has suggested (*DD*. p. 102). The Arrowpoints appoint him to be their daughter's music teacher, believing rightly that he is a first-rate musician. When he is engaged to marry their daughter, the heiress, all they can say about him is: 'who is nobody knows what – a gypsy, a Jew, a mere bubble of the earth', 'deuced foreign look', 'a mountebank or a charlatan' (*DD*. pp. 246-247). His contradictory foreignness is considered in relation to their duties towards their class and nation.²³ His engagement to their daughter is thus scandalous and he is exiled in their minds from the world and institutions to which they belong.

²¹ Physical notions of Englishness have occurred in previous novels: David in 'BJ' and Sir James in *Middlemarch* ironically associated with blooming young Englishmen, while Silas's pale complexion represents his distance from Englishness physically and socially.

²² As Bryan Cheyette argues 'Klesmer's artistic cosmopolitanism prefigures an equally powerful narrative which also challenges the centrality of Mordecai's racial determinism [and] disrupts fatally Eliot's nationalist construction of "Jewish" idealism', p. 51.

²³ With his mixed blood, sharp discussion, and cosmopolitan views, Klesmer is a character in the line of Ladislav in *Middlemarch*. Significantly, like their creator, who in her earlier letters after she came back from Geneva claims a similar identity for herself, both characters have no connections but a 'portmanteau' to set off for their wandering. Insulting and labelling the 'foreign' is seen in the provincial attitudes of Sir James and of the Arrowpoints.

Henleigh Grandcourt, who embodies the negative aspects of aristocratic Englishness, is the other masculine figure affecting Gwendolen's life. He is unknown to the provincial milieu, and introduced as someone who had been 'a good deal abroad' and a potential heir to Sir Hugo Malinger's estates (*DD*. p. 105). He is an adventurous English gentleman who, following the upper-class masculine fashion rather than seeking any personal or cultural enlargement, had been to exotic parts of the East and engaged in activities such as tiger-hunting.²⁴ With his habitual travels, luxurious life-style, sexual adventures and white hands, he is the fullest example of the kind of upper-class Englishman seen in the earlier fiction in Captain Wybrow and Arthur Donnithorne.²⁵ His despotic power has parallels, too, with Tom Tulliver and Harold Transome. His life is settled and his ambitions have been fulfilled before the novel starts,²⁶ unlike *Deronda* whose discovery of his identity and his connections provide one of the principal strands of the novel. Grandcourt is cold, distant and uninterested in objects around him, and in this regard, represents the egoistic man of the modern world.²⁷

If Grandcourt belongs to the same world as Tom Tulliver, Gwendolen's imaginative mind dwells on exotic places, like Maggie Tulliver imagining the gypsies. She expresses a flippant desire to 'go to the North Pole, or ride steeplechases, or go to be a Queen in the East' (*DD*. p. 70). Women's predicament is implied in this reference to exotic adventures in the masculine world and it recurs again in her interview with

²⁴ This experience reminds parallels with Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, in which Maggie imagined what would Tom do 'if there came a lion roaring' at her, (*MF*. p. 34).

²⁵ M. Ellen Doyle says that Grandcourt is 'the only major character whom George Eliot made totally unsympathetic, (p. 186). *The Sympathetic Response: George Eliot's Fictional Rhetoric* (East Brunswick: Associated University Presses, 1981).

²⁶ Badri Raina argues that 'Grandcourt's uniqueness lies in his total absence of self-delusion. He knows himself as well as the other characters, the readers, and the author know him', (p. 377). 'Daniel Deronda: A View of Grandcourt', *Studies in the Novel*, 17:4, (1985), 371-382. Neil McCraw, on the other hand, sees him as 'an epitome of English upper class masculinity', 'the most pronounced example of the impact of a debauched aristocracy' 'symptomatic of the pervading moral bankruptcy of English society', p. 107.

²⁷ See also David Carroll, *Conflicts of Interpretations* for interpretation of Grandcourt's role in the novel.

Grandcourt when she says: 'We women can't go in search of adventures – to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us' (*DD.* p. 135). Nevertheless, although, like Dorothea, she wishes to be unlike other women, she cannot avoid the temptation of making a 'first-rate marriage', like Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch* (*DD.* p. 37). Her love of absurdity, and wish to 'differ from everybody' (*DD.* p. 46) are other characteristics which liken her to Dorothea, although their closest affinity lies in their misguided marriages. Whereas Dorothea wishes to attain masculine knowledge through her marriage to Casaubon, Gwendolen thinks that marriage 'would be the gate into a larger freedom'; and naively believes that she can have power over Grandcourt as she does in her 'domestic Empire' (*DD.* p. 146 and p. 41). She imagines that Grandcourt 'will declare himself my slave – I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding-ring of a happy woman' (*DD.* p. 95). Of course, Grandcourt turns out to be a despotic ruler rather than the slave.

The epigraph of the chapter introducing Grandcourt to Gwendolen significantly stresses the problematic nature of the encounter with others. 'The beginning of an acquaintance whether with persons or things is to get a definite outline for our ignorance' (*DD.* p. 111). The ensuing chapters ironically show how limited Gwendolen's understanding of Grandcourt is, and this initial ignorance leads ultimately to a painful recognition of the self. The chapter in which they meet concludes by hinting at the unseen aspects of his despotic world, and it symbolically reveals Gwendolen's forthcoming helplessness and inevitable submissiveness in their marital life. Grandcourt has an unscrupulous relationship with Lush, who has come to recognise in his words 'the expression of a peremptory will', and serves that will with cynical intelligence (*DD.* p. 127). During the archery ball Gwendolen tries to avoid Mr Lush, and would like to walk away from him.

Grandcourt offers to walk with her and the first signs of Gwendolen's submission to him is indicated implicitly: 'for some mysterious reason – it was a mystery of which she had a faint wondering consciousness – she dared not to be satirical: she had begun to feel a wand over her that made her afraid of offending Grandcourt' (*DD*. p. 123). Gwendolen cannot avoid being introduced to Mr Lush, however, and he symbolically offers Gwendolen's burnous to her, holding it for her to cover herself. Gwendolen refuses to do so at first, but yields when Grandcourt insists:

'You had perhaps better put it on', said Mr Grandcourt, looking down on her without change of expression.

'Thanks; perhaps it would be wise', said Gwendolen, rising, and submitting very gracefully to take the burnous on her shoulders (*DD*. p. 124).

This passage symbolically indicates Grandcourt's limiting power on her as well as implying the forthcoming manoeuvres of Mr Lush to trap her. It also prepares for the veil of Grandcourt's 'dark enigma' to be lifted more in the next chapter, where he is seen tyrannising over objects around him (*DD*. p. 124). The next chapter traces out the details of Grandcourt's domestic life, his treatment of his dogs, his relation with his man Lush, and his future plans. The image of him established at the end of this chapter is one of a man who rules imperiously and oppressively over his small world.²⁸

The enigma of Grandcourt's life is further revealed in Lydia Glasher, a woman with black hair and eyes who is something like the shadow of Harold Transome's Greek wife, a woman, who 'was bought, in fact'. Grandcourt's discarded mistress is also the victim of masculine adventure and of the search for sexual conquest. She stands for women's instrumental role in men's life, and her deliberate encounter with Gwendolen

²⁸ Grandcourt's oppressive approach is also seen in a scene where the talk shifts from roulette in Leubronn to Caliban in Jamaica. Racial prejudice is expressed by the local people, and Deronda is the

reaffirms Grandcourt's tyranny over women, framing Gwendolen's future.²⁹ On the well-known climactic occasion, Grandcourt's power oppresses Gwendolen, forcing her to put on the diamond necklace that he had once given Lydia Glasher and which the latter has sent to Gwendolen on her wedding day. The diamonds are the aesthetic emblem of Gwendolen's hidden sin, her willingness to gain from Lydia's loss and her yielding to Grandcourt. But also they are handed from one woman to another down through the generations without belonging to any of them, and in this respect, they represent women's physical and social powerlessness.

'Put on the diamonds,' said Grandcourt, *looking at her with his narrow glance* [...]. What you think has nothing to do with it,' said Grandcourt, his *sotto voce imperiousness* seeming to have an evening quietude and finish, like his toilet. 'I wish you to wear the diamonds.'

'Pray excuse me; I like these emeralds,' said Gwendolen, frightened in spite of her preparation. *That white hand of his which was touching his whisker was capable*, she fancied, of clinging round her neck and threatening to throttle her; for her fear of him, mingling with the vague foreboding of some retributive calamity which hung about her life, had reached a superstitious point (DD. p. 427, my italics).

Grandcourt's despotic power is represented by his white hands, and replaces the image Gwendolen has had of marriage in her girlhood fantasies. Gwendolen's domestic empire, in a sense, is occupied and colonized by Grandcourt's brutal commands, and both images are connected to the contrary features of the imperial English and the inferior other. His despotic power manifests itself in both domestic and public matters.³⁰ For Grandcourt women are seen as inferior others, who have to be subdued by masculine power.

only exception. 'Grandcourt held that the Jamaican negro was a beastly sort of bapist Caliban; Deronda said he had always felt a little with Caliban' (DD. p. 331).

²⁹ Eileen Sypher argues that there is a strong bond between Gwendolen and Lydia, who represented both as the other woman. Lydia's otherness is compromised and together with Gwendolen she highlights 'their shared economic status as women' both depending economically on Grandcourt, (p. 519). 'Resisting Gwendolen's "Subjection": *Daniel Deronda's* Proto-Feminism', *Studies in the Novel*, 28:4, (1996), 506-

Every slow sentence of that speech had a terrific mastery in it for Gwendolen's nature [...] He knew the force of his own words. If this *white-handed man* with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won reputation among his contemporaries. He had certain ability, would have understood that it was safer to exterminate than to cajole superseded proprietors' (*DD*. p. 594).

The exercise of his tyrannical will is explicitly related to colonial rule and oppression, and his white hands stand for imperial power over the racial 'other'.

Gwendolen is saved by Grandcourt's sudden death, and what is more, left unattached to any other man.³¹ Her end is positively treated by Eliot, as Gwendolen learns through her encounter with three different masculine figures, and suffers under their superior gaze. In the modern world, she may be an insignificant individual, but she has gained the power to live and be better.³² She no longer belongs to a fairy tale, but has been awakened to the real world. In metaphorical terms, Gwendolen can be seen as having been saved from Grandcourt's tyrannical rule in a way which prefigures post-colonial experience. Gwendolen starts the novel as the spoiled child of Mrs Davilow as a possible Hetty or Rosamond with her self-centredness and a profound lack of interest in her own background, and is enlarged towards common humanity at the end. Her narrow Englishness opens out onto a wider world and a future which is uncertain but full of potential.

³⁰ Daniel Born evaluates this scene in terms of British colonial power exercised in Jamaica by Governor Edward Eyre in 1865. *The Birth of Liberal Guilt in the English Novel: Charles Dickens to H. G. Wells* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 50-70.

³¹ Gwendolen's painful encounter with the other sex through her marriage to Grandcourt is more explicitly explored than Dorothea's abandonment to Casaubon's intellectual narrowness.

³² N. McCraw sees this ending as a reward since 'she is no longer indicated as a part of the bankrupt English nationstate and is clearly differentiated from the inorganic (anti)society that England has become', (p. 137).

The Doubleness of Deronda's Encounters

Daniel Deronda, who is seen as an Englishman on holiday abroad in the opening scene, experiences multiple encounters with the foreign throughout the novel. His encounter with Gwendolen in Leubronn gives him a role as a spectator and eventually as a mentor to enlarge her understanding; his encounter with Mirah, a Jewish girl in England, starts his own enlargement through discovering his own origins as well as hers; and finally his encounter with his mother in Genoa complicates the images of the self and the other, lifting the veil that has lain over his life. Deronda encounters the foreign through encountering the other sex, in a parallel way to Gwendolen's experience of subjection by male figures of different kinds. Besides the distinctive features of three women, the setting of their meeting is differentiated in each encounter. Leubronn establishes the differences between Gwendolen and Deronda's moral understanding; the river Thames unites him not only with Mirah but also connects his unknown past with a wider prospect of the future; Genoa brings out 'likeness amidst more striking differences' (*DD*. p. 625) and separates the mother and son, while providing the grounds for Deronda's metaphorical travel to his origins and actual journey to the East.³³ The impact of his encounters with Mirah and Alcharisi evoke opposite feelings: Mirah's foreignness bears notions of likeness while Alcharisi's maternal role intensifies otherness.

Deronda's Englishness is announced at the beginning, but the whole novel complicates it by depicting him in a quest for his identity. The complexity in Deronda's identity is first suggested in the opening scene by his dark-hair, while Gwendolen's enquiry about Deronda hints at the uncertainty of his national identity through her stress on his name.

³³ Derek Miller notes some other characteristics of Genoa that it is also the birthplace of Massini and Columbus with whom Deronda is identified in his early years, (p. 121). '*Daniel Deronda* and Allegories

‘[...] What did you say was the name of that gentleman near the door?’
 ‘Deronda – Mr Deronda’
 ‘What a delightful name! *Is he an Englishman?*’
 ‘Yes. He is reported to be rather closely related to the baronet.’
 (DD. p. 13, my italics).

His Englishness is qualified in public opinion by the suspicion that he might be the Baronet’s illegitimate son, and thus socially lower than a gentleman with a proper status and a family name. In this sense, his physical and social appearance defines him as alien at the beginning of the novel, and this is affirmed in the course of the novel.

Deronda’s otherness is associated with the question of class for most of the novel. On one occasion Sir Hugo playfully suggests ^{to} him singing as a profession, and Deronda takes it seriously and is upset by the thought that ‘his uncle – perhaps his father – thought of a career for him which was totally unlike his own, and which he knew very well was not thought of among possible destinations for the sons of English gentlemen’ (DD. p. 169-70). He takes exception to what he sees as Sir Hugo’s demeaning attitude, although ignorant of the reasons behind it. Sir Hugo’s remark is nevertheless one of the first hints of Deronda’s cultural otherness which is to be revealed later, and it implies his view of Jews as belonging to a different class and culture.³⁴

The mystery surrounding his parental roots gives Deronda a feeling of otherness from his childhood onwards. The epigraph to chapter 16 points to the invisible realities of Deronda’s life by stating that ‘men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible

of Empire’ in *George Eliot and Europe*, ed. by John Rignall, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 113-122.

³⁴ Sir Hugo is a significant figure in Deronda’s search for identity; an ‘easy-tempered man, tolerant both of differences and defects’, he accepts Deronda’s wish to study abroad and transcends English prejudices about other nations (DD. p. 158). He not only represents the English aristocracy, but in a higher sense, stands for England itself, in the way that he has given shelter to Deronda, the future political leader of the Jews, and proposes a political role for England in shaping of Jewish national identity. On another level

history' (DD. p. 164). Deronda's invisible history is attached to significant figures in world history. This interest in history, visible for example in his reading of Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics* etc., is not separable from his confusion over 'his own history' (DD. p. 167). He ponders his personal history imagining stories about 'Pericles or Columbus', (DD. p. 168) and wishing to be a great leader like 'Pericles, or Washington' (DD. p. 173), and these figures suggest his potential impact on establishing a Jewish state. Similarly he is likened to 'Moses or Mahomet' by Hans Meyrick (DD. p. 182) and is painted as 'Prince Camaralzaman' of the Arabian Nights by one of the Meyrick girls (DD. p. 184). These images significantly foreshadow his foreign identity to be revealed later, but they also contradict his self-image as a Western leader. What deserves to be stressed here is that these deliberate pairings of Deronda with world leaders also indicate that Jewish national consciousness can be fed by the wider experiences of world history.³⁵ The images ascribed to him combine East and West in way that prefigures his ambition at the end of the novel and shows George Eliot reaching beyond Eurocentrism.

According to the cooperative plan drawn up by Alcharisi and Sir Hugo Malinger, Deronda's 'Englishness', in cultural terms if not biologically, is supposed to be secured by his education at Eton and Cambridge. Nevertheless, he departs from the norm of an Englishman with certain duties and a settled position in life by deciding to quit Cambridge and travel abroad in order to attain a wider knowledge of the world. He wants 'to understand other points of view [...] to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies (DD. p. 183).

though, he shows signs of a suspicious attitude towards the Jews. On Deronda's learning of his Jewish origin Sir Hugo warns him not to go to extremes with his Jewishness, but retain his English identity.

³⁵ For an account of historical consciousness and nationalism see Ian Dennis, *Nationalism and Desire in Early Historical Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

The germs of this inclination had been already stirring in his boyish love of universal history, which made him want to be *at home in foreign countries*, and follow in imagination the travelling students of the middle ages. He longed now to have the sort of apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely, and rob him of the choice that might come from a free growth [...] there was no need for him to get an immediate income, or to fit himself in haste for a profession and his sensibility to the half-known facts of his parentage made him an excuse for lingering longer than others in a state of social neutrality. Other men, he inwardly said, had a more definite place and duties (*DD*. p. 180, my italics).

His detachment from a purely English vision starts a process of questioning and an implied attempt to improve existing Englishness in a parallel way to what Eliot herself proposes to do by her writing. Following Ladislav's footsteps, Deronda begins as another dilettante who prefers a sort of apprenticeship in a Goethean sense and postpones choosing an occupation. The dilettantism of both characters proves in the end to be beneficial, allowing them the opportunity of finding a direction in life, and it leads to them finally adopting a political role in their respective national communities, since both obtain political roles for their nation at the end.³⁶

Re-union with the Self

After being 'at home in foreign countries' as he had wished, Deronda is seen rowing on the Thames 'in a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman at leisure, and passing under Kew Bridge' (*DD*. p. 186). His second crucial encounter with the foreign is significantly timed and comes at what seems to be the height of his Englishness. His

³⁶ Deronda differs from other young Englishmen in the novel, obviously his Englishness is wider than both Rex Gascoigne and Hans Meyrick – not to mention the ridiculed Mr Bult. Rex is another English educated figure, who prepares to settle in Canada, after Gwendolen's refusal of his marriage proposal. His typically narrow knowledge about the other parts of the world is rather like David's ignorance in 'BJ'. Hans Meyrick, on the other hand, is a type of man looking at life only out of an artists window like Naumann in *Middlemarch*. Deronda, similar to Ladislav, has a richer comprehension and embodies both the English and the foreign perspectives. If Grandcourt represents tyrannical, imperial power, Deronda stands for multiplied power of the inferior other. His richer, more tolerant and wider horizons have, it is

attention is arrested by a figure on the riverside, and he becomes a spectator for the second time at a crucial moment in another person's life.³⁷ The Englishness of both the environment and his activity contrasts with a foreign girl's search for her home and roots, but what both of them share is the sense of an uncertain and indefinite future. Unlike his earlier role as an outsider in the gambling saloon, he is on this occasion a harmonious part of this natural and solitary setting, wrapped in thoughts about himself, enjoying the natural riverside landscape. The pleasure of solitude also stands in contrast to the dark, artificial and crowded atmosphere of the gambling salon. But in both cases, his position as an outsider mirrors uncertainties in his own life: 'in his solitary excursions, he had been occupied chiefly with uncertainties about his own course' (*DD*. p. 188). The pose and predicament of the woman who now catches his eye is very different from the earlier episode: she is in the open air, surrounded by natural elements, and her eyes are fixed on the river in helplessness, rather than fixed on the artificial scene of a gambling table with an air of triumphant superiority.

Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turned his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yards' distance from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to: a girl hardly more than eighteen, of low slim figure, with most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears under a large black hat [...] and her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair (*DD*. p. 187).

Deronda's first impressions of the girl he saves from committing suicide significantly underline the ambiguity of foreignness as far as he is concerned. The first words of the rescued girl sound both foreign and yet familiar: 'At last she said in a low sweet voice, with an accent so distinct that suggested foreignness and yet was not foreign, "I saw you

suggested, a future, unlike Grandcourt's narrow glance. Deronda, in other words, embodies what the other English figures have, but he has the potential to achieve far more by virtue of his wider understanding.

³⁷ Rivkah Zim says that 'Daniel's life meets Mirah's at the point when she has decided to end hers', whereas Daniel 'has been singing "unconsciously" about pain and misery, in verses from Dante's *Inferno*', (p. 228). This ironic connection emphasises how even Deronda the most liberal figure of the

before” (DD. p. 190). The ambiguity of her foreignness indicates her connection with the past, symbolically suggested by her words ‘I saw you before’. This can be read in a figurative sense as pointing to the likeness of their origins and thus hinting at Deronda’s unknown Jewish roots. The combination of foreignness and something not foreign evoked by Mirah’s words and appearance prepare the ground for their discovery of their common roots. Her foreignness includes elements of likeness that stir Deronda’s emotions and he likens her to his mother, imagining that ‘perhaps my mother was like this one’ (DD. p. 191). Ironically he will have less fellow-feeling with his mother when he actually meets her later in the novel. In contrast to his meeting with Gwendolen, which secured Gwendolen’s symbolic return to her roots (by Deronda’s returning of the necklace, and by Mrs Davilow’s urging Gwendolen to go back home), this time it is Deronda who begins to move towards his roots,³⁸ even though the equivocal nature of those roots is anticipated by the reference to his mother.

The mother figure is given a religious, cultural and national role in the novel. Mirah repeatedly identifies her mother with her people and her religion so that her personal suffering becomes a miniature example of the whole nation ‘who had been driven from land to land and had been afflicted, and multitudes had died of misery in their wandering’ (DD. p. 222). Her search for her mother is attached to her search for her spiritual roots, and symbolically indicates the abandoned condition of human life in the modern world. London has changed so much in the twelve years of Mirah’s absence – like Lantern Yard in *Silas Marner* – that she cannot find her childhood home. The

novel has been indifferent to the ‘other’; the Jews. ‘Awakened Perceptions in *Daniel Deronda*’, *Essays in Criticism*, 36:3 (1986), 210-234.

³⁸ Bernard Paris, *Experiments in Life*, argues that Deronda’s ‘life took a more definite shape when his actions were guided by the responsibilities he felt in his relations with Mirah and Gwendolen; but these women became a part of his life quite accidentally, and his relation to them, important and satisfying as it

mother is also associated with the past, with roots and definite knowledge, whereas modern life problematizes the bonds between the past and the future, so that present experiences become either ambiguous or chaotic.

Mirah's foreignness echoes throughout her life-story as she tells it. She introduces herself to Deronda by stressing her Jewish origins, saying that 'I am English-born, But I am a Jewess' (*DD*. p. 193). She repeats the same point in a tone of almost paranoiac self-accusation: 'I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked' (*DD*. p. 200). Mirah's appearance in the novel is an enlargement in itself, for it leads to an encounter with different types and aspects of the foreign. Although her role remains largely a passive one in the novel, it opens new and broader horizons for Deronda, for herself, and for the readers. She is a kind of *deus ex machina* to speed up the process of Deronda's development. With her, foreignness, which already exists in English life, is brought to the fore explicitly, and otherness is defined as a virtue. With her, again, the meaning of the foreign is complicated, and the distinctions between the self and the 'other' become blurred.

She encounters English life through the Meyrick family, who themselves embrace cultural and racial variety. The domestic atmosphere of their home is cosmopolitan: Mrs Meyrick is half French half Scottish, the family read in French, and even their cat Hafiz, is of oriental origin. They are examples of the higher level of cultural relativism that George Eliot has attained in her personal and professional career.³⁹ Cultural pluralism is maintained in the Meyricks' debates with Mirah, even if certain contrasts between

was, did not constitute a vocation for him', p. 206. Whereas I argue that at least his relation to Mirah secures a significant vocation for him.

³⁹ The mixed aspects of the Meyricks recall Eliot's observation and admiration of Prof. Martin's family who held liberal views on religious difference in Munich during Eliot's visit in 1858.

Christianity and Judaism become visible, Mirah's presence underlines the necessity of interaction between different perspectives. One particular dialogue between them significantly reveals Mrs Meyrick's attitudes to religion. Mirah announces her regret that she had not practiced her religion, Mrs Meyrick takes a more liberal view saying that 'one may honour one's parents, without following their notions exactly. She continues her argument voicing the view that Jews could become integrated to the point of invisibility. Her speculative remark about the assimilation of the Jews indicates her subjective and unconscious feeling of superiority over them: 'if Jews and Jewesses went on changing their religion, and making no difference between themselves and Christianity, there would come a time when there would be no Jews to be seen' (*DD*. p. 375). What the novel proposes is that without a pluralistic approach and a degree of cultural relativism, humanity is doomed to continue in a narrow understanding of the other.

The typical English attitude towards the Jews is seen in other cases, even in Deronda himself. Whilst Deronda had previously not cared to reach any particular conclusion about actual Jews, Mirah's presence makes a great change and encourages him to focus on the 'long oppressed-race' (*DD*. p. 206). Eliot's contemporary readers are implicated in his earlier indifference: 'In spite of his strong tendency to side with the objects of prejudice [...] his interest had never been practically drawn towards existing Jews' (*DD*. p. 206). Eliot stresses the limited knowledge of the 'other' in English culture by showing how even her most broad-minded character, Deronda, is uncertain how to approach the present Jewish community. '[I]f Mirah's parents had been Christian, the chief difference would have been that his forebodings would have been fed with wider knowledge' (*DD*. p. 207). Mirah indirectly motivates Deronda to question the subjectivity of the dominant norms, and does not find fault with him for his inadequate

knowledge of the Jews (or any other form of the foreign), because he learns to value the foreign through his encounters. This 'wakening of a new interest – this passing from the supposition that we hold the right opinions on a subject we are careless about, to a sudden care of it, and to a sense that our opinions were ignorance – is an effectual remedy for *ennui*' (*DD*. p. 363).⁴⁰ This is the fulfilment that Eliot requires her last and most enlarged hero to achieve, and it is clearly contrasted with Grandcourt's lack of interest in any object around him, which has no future in the new world created in the last novel. Learning from his mixed experiences, gaining from his biological roots, Deronda has the capacity to achieve an invigorating form of cultural relativism at the threshold of a new century.

Deronda's Encounter with Otherness

Another female figure, Alcharisi, affects Deronda's past and future profoundly. Deronda's brief meeting with her is, I would argue, the most determining moment of the novel, in that it confirms his Jewishness; and this confirmation is brought about by a mother figure, who is foreign to the world of the novel for a number of different reasons. Deronda is asked to meet his mother in Genoa, though an arranged interview is the most unnatural way of meeting with a mother.⁴¹ Her letter inviting him to meet her

⁴⁰ Rivkah Zim, suggests that 'there are three stages in [Daniel's] progress to an awakened perception of Cohen the pawnbroker and his mother', the first is that he imagines very disagreeable images of Jews, the second is when he 'actually meets Cohen's mother and finds that there was nothing "very repulsive about her"', the third is during the Sabbath scene when he understands the spiritual and physical restoration of the person and that it is 'a time to welcome strangers to one's table' to share the peace and comfort of this day, p. 220.

⁴¹ This meeting of the mother and the son is quite different from the one in *Felix Holt*. The mother figure in *Daniel Deronda* is hostile to her own culture. She questions and criticises Jewish tradition and religion, and prefers her son to follow her steps to distance himself from his cultural-religious roots. Ironically, the son not only accepts his roots but also takes an active role working for the betterment of Jewish conditions. As we shall see Deronda's problematic relationship with his roots ends up in a progressive synthesis on a personal, national –and indeed an international –level, when he sets out to play a significant role in rebuilding his nation. The encounter of the mother and son in both cases involves an eastern experience or culture. Harold's identity becomes ambiguous after his eastern experience and Deronda chooses a definite role for his future after learning of his eastern roots. Deronda's different encounters with Gwendolen, with Mirah and with his mother are treated more complicatedly than

is signed an 'unknown mother' (*DD*. p. 617). Their initial reactions to each other evoke otherness rather than any likeness between the mother and the son, and the passages depicting their actual meeting dramatically affirm foreignness either through her self-description, or through Deronda's inward thoughts.

'I am not like what you thought I was,' said the mother, decisively, withdrawing her hands from his shoulders and folding her arms as before, looking at him as if she invited him to observe her. He had often pictured her face in his imagination as one, which had a likeness to his own: he saw some of the likeness now, but *amidst more striking differences*. [...] Her worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not a human mother, but a Melusina, who had ties with some world, which is independent of ours (*DD*. p. 625, my italics).

This allusion to another world seems to define Alcharisi as the monster in a gothic story; but on another level this world is also 'the wider world' she cared for in her younger days when she wanted to 'live a large life' free from the strict religious and cultural rules her father imposed on her (*DD*. p. 630).

Further differences between the mother and the son are shown in relation to his dual national and religious identity, about which both have different feelings.

'Then I am a Jew?' Deronda burst out with a deep-voiced energy that made his mother shrink a little backward against her cushions. [...] *'Why do you say you are glad? You are an Englishman. I secured that.'* *'You did not know what you secured me. How could you choose my birthright for me?'* said Deronda, throwing himself sideways into his chair again, almost unconsciously, and leaning his arm over the back while he looked away from his mother (*DD*. p. 627, italics original).

Deronda's Jewish identity not only allows him to fill in the blanks of his individual history, but it connects him to the national history of the Jews, and provides him with the definite responsibilities that he has longed for. His Jewishness confirms the otherness that has always marked him out in other people's eyes, while his Anglo-

Jewish identity presents the virtues of a mixed national identity and shows how Deronda gains from transcending cultural boundaries, becoming something more than an upper-class Englishman.

Alcharisi's otherness is unique for many reasons. She is a new type of women who in many respects represents the modern world. She rejects all the feminine roles assigned by tradition, the roles of daughter, wife, and mother. Tradition is in this case not strictly Jewish, but rather the common patriarchal customs which oppress all women regardless of their origins. What she values most is her professional career as a singer, and it is significant that Eliot allows her the vocation of her choice, a fate she could not dare to attribute even to her favourite female characters: Dorothea and Maggie. Alcharisi manages to escape to 'her gypsies' so to speak, and represents that female emancipation which will be carried forward by the New Woman Movement towards the beginning of a new century.⁴² She does not have the natural feelings of a mother, as she coldly confesses to Deronda: 'I did not wish you to born. I parted with you willingly' (*DD*. p. 634).⁴³ On another level, she is a marginal figure in the Jewish world represented in the novel. Her father represents Judaism's rigid religious practices – in contrast to Mirah's father Lapidoth, who is the degenerate example of the wandering Jew. She disowns her religious and cultural background to the utmost degree in that she leaves her son under Sir Hugo's guardianship, so that he may be relieved 'from the bondage of having been

Jewishness is a positive value.

⁴² Gwendolen, Mirah, Miss. Arrowpoint and the Princess take this feminine 'inheritance' and interpret it in their own terms for their future. Dorothea Barrett says that 'George Eliot can finally sympathise with a heroine who, like herself, is not earnestly and implausibly altruistic but humanly self-seeking and limited', p. 158. However Ellen B. Rosenman argues that the Princess ironically 'remains trapped in a family romance, her independent will finally beaten by the mystical link between grandfather and son', (p. 245). 'Women's Speech and the Roles of the Sexes in *Daniel Deronda*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 31 (1989), 237-256.

⁴³ Hetty is the other mother who killed her child, but her condition and social pressure she might face otherwise are stronger than Alcharisi's willing separation from her child. Hetty regrets what she did, but it is not clear in *Daniel Deronda* if Alcharisi regrets or not.

born a Jew' (DD. p. 627). She defines her experience of opposition to her Jewish roots in colonial terms.

You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the *slavery* of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out – "this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt" (DD. p. 631, my italics).

Of men like her father, she says: 'would rule the world if they could, but not ruling the world [...s]uch men turn their wives and daughters into slaves (DD. p. 631). Although there is something admirable about this forthright rejection of oppression, her example shows that there is an emotional price to pay for her liberation.

Her plan to keep her son away from Jewishness is destroyed fundamentally by making Deronda the leader to establish his nation in Palestine. Nevertheless, Alcharisi's new type of womanhood lacks emotions cannot reach the fullest sense of female identity. Modern female identity, as cold mother and egoist wife is challenged by Mirah's soft femininity and Deronda's enthusiasm with his origin. Whereas Mirah represents the new generation womanhood Eliot suggests for the future and endows with national role of Jewish nation. Mirah's encounter with English life also introduces different types of the foreigners, such as Mordecai, her father Lapidoth and the Meyricks, and achieves international dimension firstly through Deronda's literal union with his origins and secondly through his spiritual union with Mordecai.⁴⁴ The foreign multiplies in the novel with further encounters such as Deronda's determining meeting with Mordecai, as well as his meeting with his mother. Alcharisi's selfishness can deserve sympathy,

⁴⁴ Franco Moretti, sees the novel as a fairy tale: 'from the rescue of Mirah to the meeting with Mordecai; from the enigmatic question of a stranger in the Frankfurt Synagogue to the conversation with his hitherto unknown mother, Deronda becomes the hero of a melodramatic fairy tale', p. 225.

while Mirah's strict attachment to a vision of her roots and her people can be questioned. It is entirely up to the reader to make up his or her conclusion. Alcharisi has a larger tolerance for the other culture, while rejecting her own. On the other hand, Mirah's strong connection with her culture may easily lead to that fanaticism which is criticized by Deronda and Mordecai.⁴⁵

Conclusion

There is a certain consensus about the novel which stresses that it is different from Eliot's earlier realistic novels, and one of the ways in which it obviously differs is in the centrality and complexity of the foreign. The plot, as well as the theme of the novel, affirms the doubleness of the foreign. Deronda is not only united with his mother and his roots in Genoa, but it is also there that Deronda meets Gwendolen again in the circular movement of the plot. This time, however, both have duties that are more definite.⁴⁶ The foreign location provides enlargement in a different way from the atmosphere of Leubronn at the beginning. The questioning image of Daniel in the opening scene evokes the searching for other forms of life to be explored in the later parts of the novel; and the searching self is extended to the searching nation, while both of them are centrally related to English experience. What is suggested at the end is open to interpretation: just as diversity is proposed as a value throughout the novel, it exists profoundly in the conclusion of *Daniel Deronda* and, by extension, of Eliot's fictional

⁴⁵ Patrick Brantlinger argues that 'the romantic nationalism' of *Daniel Deronda* 'works against a host of what might be called provincial nationalisms, including the simple nationalistic/racist proposition that it is better to be an Englishman than a Jew, (p. 268). 'Nations and Novels: Disraeli, George Eliot, and Orientalism', *Victorian Studies* (1991-92), 255-275.

⁴⁶ On another level though I agree with G. R-Bolton, that in her last novel George Eliot moves away from the narrative solutions of the earlier novels. 'Gwendolen is not eclipsed by Deronda in the way that Dorothea is eclipsed by Ladislav, or Dinah by Adam'. She 'neither renounces nor sacrifices herself' p. 173-74. The abandonment of the reader with the ending of the novel, she argues, is because the novel follows the German *Bildungsroman* tradition, in which '*Bildung* is an ongoing process, and, in any representation of it the beginning and end are arbitrary. Since the future is uncertain, the end can offer at best only a suggestion of possibilities', p. 174.

work as a whole. The ending is clearly designed to rouse a sense of sympathy among Eliot's readers for what was remote from their experience.⁴⁷ Gwendolen achieves a state where she wishes to be better. Mirah also returns to her 'motherland', to be a symbolic mother for her people. Gwendolen experiences crucial moments of awakening to a new life, and Deronda leaves England as a young man of indefinite status, and returns to England as a mature man to play a role in the political arena, undertaking a mission to settle the Jewish nation in their homeland, 'restoring a political existence to [his] people' (*DD*. p. 803).⁴⁸ An international dimension is achieved for the first time for a character in one of Eliot's novels of English life. The whole process is promoted partly by English power,⁴⁹ but that power is used in the service of a marginalized 'other'. There is, then, a synthesis of the English and the foreign, the East and the West in the conclusion of Eliot's last novel.

Eliot's presentation of her Jewish theme is not separate from her questioning of both English and Jewish national perceptions of themselves. She attains her goal of widening her English readers' vision to encompass the variety of life both within and outside English conventions, and she does it through the most symbolical example of otherness in her time, the Jews. The oppressive imperial attitude dies with Grandcourt and liberal thinking is advanced at the end, although that ending is left open-ended. Cultural relativism is achieved not only through international encounters between the English

⁴⁷ Rivkah Zim argues that 'if *Daniel Deronda* has generally failed to find the popular audience which *Adam Bede* and *Middlemarch* have always enjoyed, then it is probably because with *Daniel Deronda* she went beyond the capacities of most of her readers', p. 232.

⁴⁸ Deronda is appointed to write the future of his nation, unlike Casaubon, who is related to writing the past in *Middlemarch*. We well know that Casaubon failed in his task, and Eliot leaves it open so that history can determine Deronda's task.

⁴⁹ Patrick Brantlinger, sees in the novel's ending that "the cosmopolitanism of the Zionist cause expresses Eliot's wish to restore Britain to the great river of human history by Hebrew prophetic vision, [...and] the downward progress of worldly empire with the English 'half' whereas the Jewish 'half' dominated by Daniel, Mordecai, and Mirah, represents the visionary growth and progress", 'Nations and Novels', p. 269.

and the Jews but also through variations within the Jewish community. The English part of the novel is marked by Gwendolen's domestic and Grandcourt's tyrannical empires, while the Jewish plot represents the variety of Jewish identity: Klesmer, Mirah, Mordecai, Alcharisi, Lapidoth and finally Deronda represent different forms of Jewishness. All of the Jewish figures share in the international dimension of Jewish life through their experience of wandering and exile, an essential difference between this novel and any of Eliot's earlier works.

The novel insists that the Jews are both familiar and alien, and stereotypical images are destroyed at the end through an insistence on individual differences within the Jewish community. Deronda's idealistic project at the end does have its weaknesses, in particular the way it ignores the existence of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine who had lived there for centuries.⁵⁰ Mordecai is, in this regard, the least satisfactory figure among the Jewish representatives. His religious identity is idealistically portrayed, and the problematic points of the novel stem from this idealism. His Jewish opinions are significant, I would argue, only to show the variety of Jewishness represented by different characters in the novel; otherwise, he does not look like a spiritual leader able to inspire his nation. And although he believes that 'each nation has its own work, and is a member of the world, enriched by the work of each' (*DD*, p. 530), he does not communicate with other cultures or nations; and neither his introverted enthusiasm nor Mirah's narrow comprehension of her national culture is

⁵⁰ Katherine Bailey Linehan stresses that 'compared to the ultimate other of "despotic" Orientals, the Jews become like Europeans [...] bridges the gap between the Oriental/colonized and the English', p. 217. Patrick Brantlinger links Eliot's sympathy towards Judaism to her personal experience that 'Judaism represented a romantic cultural and political analogue for the difficulties she encountered throughout her career as a woman, an intellectual, one half of a nontraditional (unmarried) couple', p. 256. Edward Said, on the other hand takes the issue from the opposite point in his '[*Daniel Deronda*] Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims', in *George Eliot: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Stuart Hutchinson, III (Robertsbridge, East Sussex: Helm Information, 1996); (originally published in *Social Text*, I (1979)), 534-540, (p. 539).

what Eliot suggests has potential for the future. Mordecai's dream of establishing a Jewish republic is clearly a utopian vision of a land where

there is equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community, and gave it more than brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East. [...] And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom; [...] a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West (*DD*. p. 535).

It is Deronda with his double experience and European apprenticeship rather than Mordecai who is the ideal leader for his utopian nation. If this project is seen as a utopian creation rather than a historical political venture, one can appreciate how Eliot is attempting to synthesise the world into a heterogeneous unity, where assimilation and imperialism are converted into a liberal cultural relativism,⁵¹ where enthusiasm is valued and fanaticism which omits the 'other' in its narrow judgements, is excluded. For this cultural project Eliot experiments beyond realism at the end of her career, and the novel which results is more than either a Romantic, or a Realist, or a Modernist account of life: it is something richer, a mixed form, like Deronda's identity itself.

⁵¹ Hao Li argues that *Daniel Deronda* is more 'devoted to the theme of cultural than political nationalism' in this sense idealism suggested at the end is 'not for political' reality but for cultural consciousness, p. 154.

CONCLUSION

George Eliot's reply to John Blackwood's criticism of Caterina in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story' helps elucidate Eliot's intention at the beginning of her career as a novelist to present her characters as '*mixed human beings* in such a way as to call forth *tolerant judgement, pity, and sympathy*' (*Letters*, II, p. 299, my italics). This famous statement is almost a summary of Eliot's overall purpose in her fiction in that she determines to present characters as living human beings rather than unrealistic, idealized, and stereotypical images. Sympathy and tolerance are essential concepts in all her novels and these terms presuppose one another, for sympathy cannot exist without tolerance. Her treatment of sympathy is evident in her letters, her essays and in her first novels and it is very different from what that sympathy that Foucault finds fault with. But the statement is also important for its reference to 'mixed human beings', since my argument is based on a positive acceptance of distinctions and differences in cultural and national matters. As far as individual development is concerned, becoming aware of one's self is the first step in the process of moral evolution and it is followed by an understanding of the sorrows and feelings of others and thus the achievement of sympathy. The role of the encounter with the other is crucial since it teaches understanding of the self and sympathy with one's fellows, thus creating a mutual relationship with the outside world. Eliot seeks individuality and variety – the kind of individuality and variety she admired in Nürnberg and is critical of sameness and featureless homogeneity. If Eliot's 'early novels treat sympathy mainly in terms of the relations between well-acquainted individuals, usually members of the same family or small community',¹ the world of her novels gradually widens and thus the community

¹ E. D. Ermarth, 'George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy,' p. 23.

and the type of relations among individuals undergo a change from family and rural to national and cosmopolitan in the course of her career. Mixed human beings are exemplified more fully towards the end of Eliot's career novels and become more complicated and in her last three novels.

George Eliot's idea of sympathy has close affinities with her idea of art and it plays a major part either implicitly or explicitly in each of her novels.

Art must be either real and concrete, or ideal and eclectic. Both are good and true in their way, but my stories are of the former kind. I undertake to exhibit nothing as it should be; I only try to exhibit some things as they have been or are, seen through such a medium as my own nature gives me. The moral effect of the stories of course depends on my power of seeing truly and feeling justly [...] (*Letters*, II, p. 362).

She declares her main aim of maintaining a realistic perception in her novels, while accepting the inevitability of a subjective outlook. In her essay 'The Natural History of German Life', she indicates the social dimension of sympathy in relation to the effects of works of art, maintaining that Art encourages the extension and 'awakening of social sympathies' (*Essays*, p. 111). This vision of Art is applied in her first full novel *Adam Bede* where she amplifies her earlier compressed statements in the celebrated passage in chapter 17 on 'the faithful representing of commonplace things', which had not received much attention from English novelists before. In *The Mill on the Floss* Eliot imposes moral responsibility on her characters, and insists that sympathy is a necessary precondition for moral development insisting that 'the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision' (*MF*, p. 500, my italics). In *Silas Marner* the most alienated figure Silas is integrated into and accepted by society.

Sympathy and tolerance create a form of cultural relativism which gradually reaches a higher level in her last novels. In her famous letter to Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe after

the publication of *Daniel Deronda* liberal opinions of a mature writer with a higher respect for the foreign are clearly expressed:

As to the Jewish element in 'Deronda', I expected from first to last in writing it, that it would create much stronger resistance and even repulsion than it has actually met with. But precisely because I felt that the usual attitude of Christians towards Jews is – I hardly know whether to say more impious or more stupid when viewed in the light of their professed principles, I therefore felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to. *Moreover, not only to the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us. There is nothing I should care to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs.* But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment. Can anything be more disgusting than to hear people called 'educated' making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty in insulting? They hardly know that Christ was a Jew. And I find men educated at Rugby supposing that Christ spoke Greek. [...] The best can be said of it is, that it is a sign of the *intellectual narrowness* – in plain English, the stupidity, which is still the *average mark of our culture* (*Letters VI*, p. 301-2, my italics).

Sympathy with the dispossessed is intended to reduce 'intellectual narrowness' and to move beyond common prejudices towards understanding a particular embodiment of the foreign, the Jews. In *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, she takes this juxtaposition of the Jews and the English a stage further, significantly distinguishing between the English as 'a colonising people who have punished others' and 'the Jews' as a powerless people in exile.

The men who planted our nation were not Christians, though they began their work centuries after Christ; and they had a decided objection to Christianity when it was first proposed to them: they were not monotheists, and their religion was the reverse of spiritual. But since we have been fortunate enough to keep the island-home they won for us, and have been on the whole a prosperous people, rather continuing the plan of invading and spoiling other lands than being forced to beg for shelter in them, nobody has reproached us because our fathers thirteen hundred years ago worshipped Odin, massacred Britons,

and were with difficulty persuaded to accept Christianity [...] The Red Indians, not liking us when we settled among them, might have been willing to fling such facts in our faces, but they were too ignorant, and besides, their opinions did not signify, because we were able, if we liked, to exterminate them. The Hindoos also have doubtless their rancorous against us and still entertain enough ill-will to make unfavourable remarks on our character, especially as to our historic rapacity and arrogant notions of our own superiority; [...] they are unable to turn us out; at least when they tried we showed them their mistake. We do not call ourselves a dispersed and a punished people: *we are a colonising people, and it is we who have punished others* (TS. p. 137-8, my italics).

In this sense Eliot contrasts these two nations using the Jews to measure and improve the English, instead of measuring the other according to English values, as many of her contemporaries did. She does not seek to replace England, but rather desires to 'widen [its] vision a little' to take account of the other parts of the world; and this can best be achieved through a long process of development, rather than through revolutionary action. A lack of interest in 'others' is deeply related to the English experience of colonialism and the culture of punishing others when they rebel. This kind of oppressive power is revealed with careful ironic distance by Eliot, as can be seen in the figures of Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* and Henleigh Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*, both of whom are convinced of the superiority of their own narrow opinions.

Throughout the examination of each of Eliot's novels I have endeavoured to demonstrate how, in their thematic and narrative structure, she concerns herself with the idea of widening the 'English vision a little'.² All of the novels examined in this thesis concern themselves intimately with the idea of broadening the horizons of English life. They operate as forms of foreignness themselves, offered to those readers who have not yet otherwise encountered anything beyond their own narrow circle. In each case

² In her letter Eliot told Blackwood an anecdote: a statesman has 'said that I first opened to him a vision of Italian life, then of Spanish, and now I have kindled in him a quite new understanding of Jewish people. This is what I wanted to do – *to widen English vision a little* in that direction' (*Letters* VI, p. 304).

therefore, elements of the foreign are inserted into English life. As I proposed at the beginning of the thesis, it has become apparent that the role of foreignness progressively increases in the course of Eliot's career. The importance of Eliot's own travels from the familiar to the strange can be seen in the way that certain assumptions inform her novels. There are clear parallels between her fiction and the views she maintains in her private life. Her characters, settings and environments shift from small English towns in her first novels to the metropolitan cities of the world. Eliot's writing career, then, runs from the closely knit community to a more encompassing world and a troubling awareness of international themes.

England is often evoked with nostalgia, as in *Silas Marner* where the narrator ironically recalls 'Merry England' at a crucial moment when the prejudices of the villagers towards outsiders are being exposed. In another example from *Middlemarch* Dorothea desires to achieve a higher standard of knowledge, and to learn to live better and more productively 'here-now-in England'. Yet both examples are delicately contradicted and challenged by the elements of the foreign that play a central part in these novels. In a similar way Englishness is made visible in the physical appearance as well as the conventional narrow attitudes of certain characters, such as Captain Wybrow in 'Mr Gilfil's Love Story', Arthur Donnithorne in *Adam Bede*, Sir James Chettam in *Middlemarch* and finally Henleigh Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*. These masculine characters are all described with their white hands, sharply defined noses, and blooming complexions, and are associated with the imperial culture of England. There are however figures who represent a different and more attractive kind of Englishness, such as Adam in *Adam Bede* or the Garths in *Middlemarch*; figures who are closely connected to the natural elements in their milieu, and are portrayed as positive and even

picturesque examples of the rural world. Eliot's representations of the English provincial world.

The primary phase of encountering the foreign is through travel from the familiar to the unknown that lies beyond the self, beyond the local community or beyond England itself. Journeys mainly involve three areas, geographically and culturally distinct from England namely: Europe, Colonial Territories and the Orient. But only Continental Europe, well-known to George Eliot from her own journeys, is depicted visibly in the experience of the characters. There are references to the West Indies, India, and America as scenes of England's geographical, cultural and national encounters with the 'other'. The Orient, on the other hand, is exemplified in *Felix Holt* and in *Daniel Deronda*, and these two novels show the novelist's imagination reaching out to a world different both from England and from Europe.

She has been criticized for remaining silent or ambiguous on certain issues, in particular the East. Edward Said, for example, points out that George Eliot seems indifferent to the people living in the East even when she sends her Jews to Palestine to establish a nation, and ignores what will happen to the present inhabitants there. Here I partly agree with Said that in her illustration of the Eastern peoples Eliot privileges the Greeks in *Felix Holt* and the Jews in *Daniel Deronda*, rather than the Turks or the Palestinians. Ancient culture is attributed to the Greeks, and multiculturalism to the Jews, while she keeps silent about the other cultures. Her silence, however, can also be understood in relation to her devotion to realism, and as evidence of her unwillingness to write about what she had not distinctly experienced. Ambiguity can similarly be seen as a mark of the complexity that distinguishes her fiction, as my reading of the novels has tried to show. The ambiguity of Harold Transome in *Felix Holt*, for example, is intended to enrich the

vision of English life. Harold is at once an Oriental, an Englishman, an imperialist, a political radical, and a member of the landed gentry brought up in political conservatism. As she once claimed in a letter to John Sibree early in her life: '[l]ooking at the matter aesthetically, our ideal of beauty is never formed on the characteristics of a single race' (*Letters*, I, p. 246). What is more, Eliot's complex use of the cultural other brings foreign blood into England life, giving significant roles to Harold's child Harry, and to Will Ladislaw. Such mixing of blood can be seen in positive terms as holding well for the future domestic and public life of England.

One of the most interesting results to emerge from this examination is that George Eliot's novels portray the positive role of the foreign in the formation of both the individual and the national identity. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, her novels engage in a historical exploration of the interaction, sympathy and tolerance that come from encountering the foreign, so that her fiction explores and illuminates the troubled issues which are still present today. The self, the home and the nation are represented as confused in most cases, and the characters, particularly in the later novels, are in search of a better self, a better home, and a new national ground in a state of rootlessness, homelessness, and nationlessness.

There is a common thread between *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda* although they are very different in form and style: they both value otherness and its potential quality for development. *Scenes of Clerical Life* is centrally concerned with widening the sympathies of the reader, and it does so by presenting the foreign in juxtaposition to the suspicious opinions of local people. These first glimpses of the foreign in English life anticipate more diverse and intense images in the later works. The Countess, for example represents the shallow perception of the foreign, while

Caterina's foreignness and Captain Wybrow's Englishness are important elements that will be developed in the later novels. English rural life is largely static in Eliot's first full novel, *Adam Bede*, yet significant elements of diversity are introduced within the framework of Englishness. *The Mill on the Floss* shrinks from the larger possibilities of life suggested by the foreign, Maggie returns to her confined existence, made even narrower by ostracism. In her earlier novels Eliot repeatedly declared her concern with the normal, the ordinary, and even the uninteresting; with *Silas Marner* she starts to call for sympathy for those who are different, alien and marginalized and the importance of the marginal even in provincial English life is explored further in the novels to come. In some other works Eliot plays with the idea of the foreign and complicates the obvious impact of the foreign, as in the case of David Faux in 'Brother Jacob'. David, whose limited knowledge and ambition to dominate the inferior blacks in America is mocked, is welcomed neither by the blacks nor by people back in England. *Felix Holt* extends Eliot's positive understanding of, and questioning approach to the cultural other. England is for the first time in Eliot's fiction subjected to the imperial gaze of an Englishman, and uncertainties are foregrounded at the end of the novel. The narrow perspectives of English life are criticised by Harold's radical ideas gained in the East. Hence, a degree of cultural relativism is potentially suggested by Harold's different views, even though they remain ambiguous and opportunistic. As Eliot complicates her 'fascination in the other'³ English life, too, is presented in a richer and deeper fashion in the later novels, which deal with larger worlds and a greater variety of foreignness. Society in *Middlemarch* is no longer the closely knit society of the earlier novels, but a wider world with a modern life style, informed by changing conditions and social mobility. The cultural context of the 'other' is developed in the last three novels of

³ Barbara Hardy, 'Rome in *Middlemarch*: A Need for Foreignness', p. 9.

English life, which present mixed cultural and national characters. Harold, Ladislav and Daniel represent different forms of cultural diversity and also suggest the marginalized elements in English life. Englishness consists of collective knowledge as a type of anonymous network of certain values and norms, carried over from previous generations, and George Eliot critically exposes the typical English attitude towards the normal and the abnormal, the self and the other, the English and the foreign,⁴ which involves a 'normalising judgement and examination'⁵ of the dominant party and a tendency to 'differentiate, hierarchies, homogenise and exclude.'⁶ There is, however, a strong sense of the foreign as a necessary and inevitable part of the modern world in these novels and its impact on the national culture is positive and creative. 'Intellectual narrowness' in England is changed to a more tolerant outlook and the hostility of provincial people to those 'who differ from them in customs and beliefs' (*Letters*, VI, p. 301-2) is converted into a degree of cultural relativism in George Eliot's last novel *Daniel Deronda*. In widening its scope, her fiction becomes not only more complex but also more modern in its gradual development towards a diverse and troubling awareness of international themes and problems.

⁴ Paul Rabinow, 'From Discipline and Punish' in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 206.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.188, (my italics).

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 20.

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